DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 268 586 CS 209 749

AUTHOR	Kelly, Patricia P., Ed.; Small, Robert C., Jr., Ed.
TITLE	Censorship or Selection?
INSTITUTION	Virginia Association of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE	86
NOTE	127p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Viewpoints (120)
JOURNAL CIT	Virginia English Bulletin; v36 n1 Spr 1986
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescent Literature; Attitude Change; Books; *Censorship; Childrens Literature; Court Litigation; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Literature; *Literature Appreciation; Public Opinion; Publishing Industry; Reader Response; *Reading Material Selection; School Community Relationship; Values Education
IDENTIFIERS	Shakespeare (William)

ABSTRACT

Representing the views of persons from a variety of fields including parents, educators, authors, librarians, and publishers, the papers in this journal issue explore the fine line between censorship (with an eye toward silencing ideas) and selection (with the recognition that just as literature can enlighten it can also degrade). Following an introduction by the editors, the article titles and their authors are as follows: (1) "Literature for Youth: Separate but Unequal" (Norma Klein); (2) "Random Notes from a Midnight Censor" (Gayle Greeno); (3) "Much Ado about Textbooks: The Cleansing of the Bard as Seen by a State Board Member" (Margaret Marston); (4) "Censorship: The ******* Solution" (Karla S. Henthorn); (5) "Censorship: Why or Why Not?" (Susan B. McLeskey); (6) "Will the Real Censors Please Stand Up?" (Carolyn Reas); (7) "A Profile in Censorship" (B. G. Raines); (8) "An Encounter with Censorship" (Mary Barnes); (9) "Self-Censorship: A Conservative View" (James D. Black); (10) "Censorship as an Ethical Issue" (Robert C. Hanna); (11) "Restrictions on Novel Could Be Positive" (Brian O'Neill); (12) "Don't Let Your Curriculum Be Hatch-eted" (Paul B. Slayton); (13) "Censorship and the Aim of Education: Some Unanswered Questions" (Onalee McGraw); (14) "Are School Censorship Pressures Increasing?" (Lee Burress); (15) "Sources of Censorship Pressure" (Judith Krug); (16) "Hidden Censorship: Fact or Fiction?" (Janis H. Bruwelheide); (17) "Whose Truth? Bias in Textbooks" (Dan Fleming); (18) "The New Right, Humanism, and 'Dirty Books'" (June Edwards); (19)"Accuracy in Academia: A New Threat to American Universities" (Ruth Cline); (20) "Being Prepared: Writing Rationales for Frequently Challenged Books" (Herb Thompson); (21) "Rationale for 'Bridge to Terabithia'" (Mary M. Brittain); (22) passages from "Areopagitica" (John Milton); (23) "Teaching A Poem" (Joseph Strzepek); (24) "Creating a Character" (Julia Shields); (25) "Reflecting upon Our Mortality" (Beth Schnell); and (26) "The Censor's Dilemma: Learning by Doing" (Dan Walker). (HTH)

Spring 1986 Volume 36, Number 1

ED268586

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Virginia English Bulletin

Censorship or Selection?

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Virginia Association of Teachers of English

Virginia English Bulletin

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Patricia P. Kelly and Robert C. Small, Jr.
Editors
College of Education
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Ray VanDyke
Business Manager
Montgomery County Schools
Christiansburg, VA 24073

David Starkey
Editorial Assistant
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061

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The Editorial Board of the *Virginia English Bulletin* welcomes contributions related to the teaching of language arts and English at all school levels, especially manuscripts of 3-8 pages on announced foci. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced, and submitted in duplicate. Footnotes should rarely be used. Deadlines for copy are September 15 and February 1. Include self-addressed, stamped return envelope. Authors should include name, school, position, courses taught. The editors reserve the right to modify manuscripts to fit length and language considerations.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ADVERTISING:

Subscription is included in the annual membership dues of $10.00. Student dues are $2.00. Single copies are $4.00. Membership is for the calendar year. For advertising rates, contact the Business Manager (see above).

Published twice annually by the Virginia Association of Teachers of English Language Arts, a non-profit affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English and a department of the Virginia Education Association. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of VATE.

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1986 VATE CONFERENCE
October 17-19
Key Bridge Marriott
Arlington, Virginia

Beyond Basic Literacy to Literacy Education

> One important task facing curriculum makers in literature is to identify those essential literary experiences which we will share and then to build systematically the background that readers need. (James R. Squire, "The Current Crisis in Literary Education," *English Journal*, Vol. 74, no. 8, p. 20)

The theme of the 1986 VATE Conference presents a concern each English teacher has shared in his/her efforts to extend and deepen the responses of students to literature. Does our curriculum provide for common literary experiences? Does it foster a common literary heritage? How are we providing common literary experiences? Are we building the foundation for a shared literary culture? How does the national mandate, to teach the basics, fit into a content-based curriculum?

Join with us October 17-19, 1986, at the Key Bridge Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Virginia, as we reassess the content of the English curriculum.

If you have any suggestions for speakers or resource personnel, please send your information to Chris Hopkins, Green Run High School, 1700 Dahlia Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23456.

Tribute to Alan M. McLeod

by Patricia P. Kelly and Robert Small

Alan M. McLeod
Editor

Virginia English Bulletin
1977 through 1985

As Dr. Alan M. McLeod steps down as editor of the *Virginia English Bulletin*, he can be proud that the journal as you read it today is a product of his work and dedication. The first *Bulletin* appeared in 1951, an eight-page document distributed to VATE's 100 members. That issue was edited by Fred Carpenter, the treasurer of VATE at that time. Beginning in 1952, Foster B. Gresham began editing the *Bulletin*, followed by Rinaldo C. Simonini in 1960, Frances N. Wimer in 1966, and Alan joined that prestigious list in 1977.

As VATE grew, so did the *Bulletin* but only because of the long, lonely hours spent by this one man, who struggled with unwieldy prose in manuscripts, who shaped each edition to fit the page restraints of an often limited budget, and who cared enough about VATE and its image to ensure that its journal represented the highest possible quality. Under his guidance the *Bulletin* has become a publication envied by many other NCTE affiliates. His format and design changes moved the *Bulletin* into professional journa' status. He instituted the thematic approach, which we will continue. Because he believed that the *Bulletin* is for and by teachers and should serve their interests, he initiated the awards for the best articles written by teachers. Those awards, of course, will continue. The quality of his editorial work

has set high standards for the incoming editors. We will endeavor to maintain those standards so that the teachers of Virginia can continue to point with pride to the *Virginia English Bulletin*, as they have been able to under Alan's editorship.

Alan M. McLeod is too young to be the "grand old man" of VATE, but in his contributions to the organization that is exactly what he is. With a wry smile and a twinkle in his eye, he has watched the fumbling endeavors and heard the oftentimes inane questions of many of us as we began our VATE duties. No single person in VATE is more influential than Alan McLeod. He listens, counsels, and guides with a gentle hand. But he has one trait that sets him apart: He is quick to give credit to others even when his work was the basis of the endeavor and without him there would have been no final product. He is thoughtful, perceptive, and precise, often "reining in" some wild idea that one of us might propose, giving us a history of VATE's perspective, and helping us to rethink issues.

Alan served as president of the Virginia Conference on English Education in 1971 and 1972; then served as president of VATE in 1973. Having worked with VATE prior to becoming president and having served on the Executive Board in some capacity since that time, Alan has contributed as much to English language arts as any professional in Virginia. As he continues in his position as Director of the Division of Teacher Education at Virginia Commonwealth University, we extend our sincere appreciation for all he has given us.

From the Editors: Censorship or Selection?

by Robert Small and Patricia P. Kelly

Nothing represents the complexity of the world in which we live better than the issue of censorship and selection of the literature we use in schools. From one extreme it seems so simple: People in a democracy have the right to read whatever they want to read; publishers, the right to publish whatever they want to publish. Thomas Jefferson and the Constitution demand such freedom. But, at the other extreme, it seems equally simple: Corrupt literature will corrupt. Schools have the responsibility to teach literature that supports traditional values and encourages students to virtuous and patriotic behavior.

Somewhere in between stand most of us. We dislike censorship; but we suspect that some works of literature, like the Pied Piper of Hamlin, can lead children astray. We are moved by the words of John Milton (re-printed in this issue), but we wonder if there isn't some point at which we must draw the line. And because we value literature ourselves, we have to recognize, as do would-be censors and other concerned citizens, that literature has power to change people. That being so, it seems illogical to maintain — as some who oppose censorship have done — that a book never hurt anyone. Surely, if literature can inspire and ennoble, it can also degrade. And all reasonable people want to protect children from harm. A parent objecting to a book recently said, "You wouldn't let a child wander onto a highway because you feel he needs to learn from experience. You'd protect him. Well, the same thing is true for the child's mind. It needs protecting from harmful ideas." Such an analogy may ignore differences between a child's mind and a child's body, but we shouldn't dismiss the truth it contains or the sincere concern that lies behind it. Parents throughout the history of schools have controlled what their children studied. Schools have been conceived of as conservative places designed for passing on a cultural heritage, not the re-forming of societies. Yet the vitality of a democracy is the interchange of ideas, the openness to new and radical thoughts, the recognition that today's wild notion or subversive concept may well be tomorrow's brilliant insight and the conventional wisdom of the day after tomorrow

Extreme behavior on either side of the issue helps no one. Censors who see conspiracy behind every story they dislike turn reasonable differences of opinion into personal antagonism. Wild claims that *A Scarlet Letter* is filth or *Huckleberry Finn*, a racist tract help no one to understand the

nature of either the disagreements or the points on which people on both sides can agree. At the same time, an attitude of smug superiority, intellectual snobbishness, and hostile defensiveness are flaws of which those who oppose censorship have all too often been guilty.

In the hope that giving individuals coming from many different view points on selection and censorship a chance to say what they have to say might help to clarify the issues, we invited a number of people with a stake in the issue to write for us in this issue of the *Bulletin*. Most of them agreed, although both the Moral Majority and the American Civil Liberties Union did not. And so we give you the thoughts of a famous author, Norma Klein, who detects a censoring influence within the publishing industry in the very way it conceives of literature and its readers. We give you the thoughts of two students on the influence of censorship on their reading; and the ideas of Margaret Marston, a member of the State Board of Education. Carolyn Reas, a leader of a concerned parents' group, explains her position. A publisher presents her point of view, as do a former superintendent of schools and a former English supervisor. We share with you the experience and insights of leaders of NCTE, ALA, and VATE and VCEE. We listen to other voices, including one, John Milton, from the past. We know you will find their words thought-provoking.

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Winter 1986 issue of the *Virginia English Bulletin* will have as its focus

A Critical Look at Literature Worth Teaching

Rather than explaining ways to teach literature, this issue of the *Bulletin* seeks to present articles that offer critical analyses of short stories, poems, novels, plays, and non-fiction appropriate for students in grades K through 12. The articles may explore theme, characterization, style, structure, and other aspects of a work or several works by one or more than one author. Some suggestions for teaching the work may also be included but should not be the main emphasis of the article.

Deadline for submission of manuscripts is September 15, 1986.

Literature for Youth: Separate but Unequal

Norma Klein

We begin this look at the dimensions of censorship and selection with an article from the perspective of a creator of literature. Normal Klein's novels, Mom, the Wolfman, and Me, Breaking Up, Angel Face, *and many others have received the praise of critics and teenage readers alike. This important contemporary novelist finds censorship in the publishing industry's attitudes toward books for young adults and the authors of those books.*

I have to confess that when I first approached the topic "Literature for Youth: Separate but Unequal?" I was afraid that, if I spoke my mind, I would succeed only in making all my readers as disheartened as I am about the current situation with young adult books. But let me start out with what I think is at the heart of the matter. The children's book field is dominated by women. Most of the editors, almost all of the librarians, and a large percentage of the writers are female. This, I believe, is, in a nutshell, why the field is largely considered by the literary establishment as a whole with, at worst, contempt, and at best a mild kind of condescension. It is true of all fields in which women predominate. Is it likely to change? That is, can we look forward to a time when the field will become truly coeducational, when as many men as women will enter it in any of the capacities I've mentioned? Frankly, I doubt it. I think women have always been drawn to fields connected with children. They share, with children, a role in the world which is subservient. Like children, they are often ignored — legally, personally, and philosophically. This gives women, perhaps, a greater capacity to understand what being a child is like. Then, too, as mothers, women writers relive their childhood experience at closer range than do most men writers, whether they are parents or not. The experience of watching their children grow up is fascinating to most women in a way it is still not fascinating to most men. We can all count on the fingers of one hand the truly egalitarian marriages we know, in which the father has had as much to do, in terms of day to day child rearing, as the mother. Such fathers are interviewed on TV and made much of; they remain in the minority. Thus, I think the preponderance of women writers in the children's book field stems from a natural biological and societal set of experiences.

We then have a corollary of this first fact — namely that men are almost always reluctant to enter a field in which women predominate simply because of its lower status. Whereas a woman in our society gets kudos for becoming a doctor or an engineer, a man is likely to draw mainly derision from becoming a nurse or kindergarten teacher. Only the brave shall enter here.

Most men, like many women, are too fearful of flying in the face of public opinion to want to take such risks.

Can we, then, hope for another turn of events which will correct what I see as an unjust and preposterous state of affairs? Namely, that a time will come when fields in which women predominate will not be regarded as less worthy in the world at large than coeducational fields or fields like politics in which men predominate? Again — I hate to be depressing — but as Nixon said of Mondale's possibility of election in 1984, "I wouldn't bet the ranch on it . . . . In fact, I wouldn't even bet the outhouse."

How have I come to these depressing conclusions? In part from twenty years of publishing novels both for young adults and for adults. My adult novels, the first of which, *Give Me One Good Reason,* came out in 1973, the last of which, *Give and Take,* came out in 1984, are nowhere near as well known as my young adult novels. The novels I write for adults are what is sometimes called "mid list," not racy enough to be mass market in the Jackie Collins sense, not abstruse and convoluted enough to be literary in *The White Hotel* sense. I've seen fine writers like Anne Tyler gradually edge their way out of this category simply by sheer endurance, writing one novel after another until they caught on. I've also seen equally fine novelists — like Linda Crawford and Anne Bernays — unable, at least until this point, to break out of it. But what I've discovered is this. Even barely known adult novelists are frequently asked by the New York *Times* and others to review not only adult fiction, which would stand to reason, but also, more absurdly, children's books. Even within our own field we consider the true experts to be, not those who write for the field or who are knowledgeable in it, but those who have accomplished what our society still sees as a real literary achievement: writing adult novels. This fact is brought home to me by the numerous people who still ask me, unaware of the thirteen adult novels I've published, "Are you ever going to try a real novel, something for adults?"

Before examining the fate of some of my own adult novels, particularly the ones which were actually young adult novels in disguise, I'd like to look at two examples from the past: *The Catcher in the Rye* and *A Separate Peace.* I happen, personally, to still love *The Catcher in the Rye,* which I reread almost annually, and to find *A Separate Peace* a bit of a bore. But the fact is these two novels, which today would very likely be published as young adult books, appeared at a time when the dread term, so dear to marketing people, had not been invented. True, *The Catcher in the Rye,* so I've heard, was turned down by many publishers, one of them a friend of my parents, as being "just another coming of age story told by a sensitive young man." But because it was published for adults, it was taken seriously, reviewed seriously and is still regarded seriously today. I'm sure Salinger can still live nicely on the royalties from that book alone. If it had been a young adult book, the royalties might keep him in granola and yogurt.

Two other examples of young adult novels with teenage protagonists

which come from other countries and other periods of time are Colette's novels about Claudine and Edna O'Brien's delightful trilogy about growing up in Ireland, *The Country Girls, Girl with Green Eyes*, and *Girls in Their Married Bliss*. Colette was renowned for her insight into young women, their sensuality, their attempts to discover their identities, many of the themes which are at the heart of such modern-day young adult novels as Betty Miles' *Looking On* or Norma Mazer's *Taking Terry Meuller*. Yet Colette was not only taken seriously as a novelist; she was the first French woman writer to be elected to the Academie Francaise. Her latter-day equivalent, Francoise Sagan, is also considered in France to be an important novelist. As for Edna O'Brien, all of her novels are still in print in Penguin editions, a fact which delights me since I think they would give as much pleasure to this generation as they did to my own.

What am I trying to say? Simply that when a book is termed "Young Adult," when it is edited by the children's book department, one thing is certain: it will never be read by adults, it will never be reviewed seriously, its author will never be interviewed or her future books announced in Forecasts in the *New York Times* or elsewhere. If the title of this article were "Literature for Youth: Separate but Equal," I doubt any of the many writers for whom I speak would care. But as of now there can't be a single general magazine or newspaper in America, and I would wager anywhere in the world, that gives a tenth equal time to young adult books. The reviews of y.a.'s are always placed toward the back of the magazine. They are always brief, a paragraph or two. I have never seen, nor do I expect ever to live to see, a young adult novel, no matter how extraordinary its degree of literary merit, reviewed on the front page of a book review section. I have almost never seen, in reviews of my own or others' young adult novels, an indication that the reviewers had any knowledge of other books that author had written. Book review editors of children's pages come and go, take to drink, jump off cliffs, but the situation remains pretty much the same.

Two other examples of the ways in which the adult literary establishment disparages young adult novels: The American Book Awards, formerly the National Book Award, decided a few years ago not even to give an award for children's books. What does this say? That to them, *nothing written for this field can ever, by its very nature, approach an adult novel!* I once waged an unsuccessful and seemingly endless struggle with an otherwise excellent writer's organization I belong to, Poets and Writers. One of the valuable services this organization performs is to put out almost annually a Directory of American Poets and Fiction Writers. The directory lists the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all such writers and what readings they are willing to give. I was included in this volume because I also write "real" adult books, those in which all the main characters are over thirty. I called them and said I thought it was a great pity that they had excluded all the many fine fiction writers who happened to write exclusively for children or young adults. Well, they huffed, children's books

are picture books. They can't be called novels. They wouldn't fit. Of course, poetry doesn't fit either, but that evidently presented no problems. I explained patiently that indeed there were long works of fiction, clearly novels no matter how one defined the term, written by authors who were not included in this volume. "Who were they?" Poets and Writers wanted to know. It all sounded so confusing and complex to them. I promised to send them a list of 100 respected novelists in the young adult field along with their personal addresses, if I knew them, or their publishers' addresses. I did this five years ago. Several volumes of the Directory have come out since. Not one of these writers is included.

This summer (1985) I was struck by the success of two books which, while not young adult, brush up against that category closely enough to be worth study. Both of them were on the best seller lists in America. I refer to *Less than Zero* by Bret Easton Ellis, a twenty-year-old Bennington College student, and *The Lover* by Marguerite Duras. My eighteen-year-old daughter and I went to hear Bret Ellis speak on a panel entitled, "The Influence of the 60's on Today's Writers." He was an engaging, modestly affable young man who made everyone in the audience other than my daughter feel about one hundred years old when he announced, "Frankly I remember the opening of *Jaws* better than I do the fall of Saigon since I was only five at the time."

My daughter and I bought the book when it came out. Naturally we read it differently. She is his contemporary; I was someone, he confessed to us at the reception afterward, he had read in junior high. The hero of his book goes home to Los Angeles for vacation: he is attending a college on the East Coast. The book is a portrait, whether valid or not, of "today's youth" or at least a certain segment of spoiled, overindulged, extraordinarily wealthy teenagers who are in a constant drug induced stupor, have sex with virtually anything that moves, and walk numbly through a series of parties none of which they seem to enjoy very much. References to rock music abound. Jen and I agreed that it wasn't a very good book. She assured me that the kids she knew in New York bore no resemblance to Ellis's teenagers, but she also felt he had caught something valid about the mood of Reagan's America. In a candid interview in *Publishers Weekly*, Ellis's editor, Bob Asahima at Simon and Schuster, said he attributed the book's success, as I would also, both to the sensational nature of the material and to the author's age.

But I began wondering: What if the same book had dealt, not with college kids, but with high school kids who were fifteen or sixteen? There are young characters in the book like the hero's junior high age sisters who watch porno movies in their spare time, but they play no larger role than his middle-aged father, who has a face lift and leaves the hero's mother for another man. I think the book would, one, have had a much harder time getting into print and, two, would not, despite the age of the author and the sensational nature of the material, have been widely read. Why? To answer the first, the kind of hard core realism *Less than Zero* represents

is all but verboten in the young adult field. When I write about nice, intelligent, college-bound responsible, non-drug-taking kids, such as my own, having a love affair, *that* is considered hard core realism and causes much consternation and panic. My books are considered, as far as the field wishes to go in that direction, much too far in the eyes of many. What a pity. Though I didn't think Ellis's book was outstandingly written, I think the statement he was trying to make about what our supposedly wonderful, affluent society is doing to its young, is an important one. I would welcome the day when such a book could be published about those junior high age sisters, for instance, who were given such short shrifts.

To add another "what if": What if Ellis's book had been about the same material and by a person of the same age, but was by and about a college age girl? Would it be on the best seller list? I doubt it. From *The Catcher in the Rye* on up and down, we assume that male protagonists speak for all of us. Female protagonists are of interest only to other females. Look at today's movies which are supposedly geared to "the teenage audience." They are all, even the better ones like *Back to the Future,* about boys. The only girls in these movies are good natured prostitutes as in *Risky Business* or the perennially sweet, virginal girl friend as in *The Sure Thing.* In a wonderful recent non-teenage English movie, a *Wetherby* character says of himself, "I realized I was a subplot in her life." Girls are subplots; boys are plots. Girls will read books with boy protagonists. Boys will rarely read books with girl protagonists. Ditto women and men. Freud once asked "What do women want?" I think I can give a very simple answer. We want men who will read (and love) books written by and about women. I know one or two of these men. I want society to clone them. Is there anything that can be done about this other than to let out a piercing scream in the dead of night? I don't think so.

Let's go back to Marguerite Duras's *The Lover.* As with Ellis, though this is I think a little less important here, Duras's life and personality and the many articles on her that have appeared everywhere from *Vanity Fair* to *People* have lent *The Lover* an extra literary interest. She is elderly, a former alcoholic, yet has a lover in his thirties. How French! we exclaim with a trace of condescension mixed with, at least on my part, admiration. Like *Less than Zero,* which it in no other way resembles, *The Lover* deals with sensational material: a fifteen year old French girl, dressed like a child prostitute, having an illicit affair with an Oriental man in his late thirties. Like Nabokov's *Lolita, The Lover* combines this sensational material with a detached, philosophical, analytical style. Literature buffs can read it for the latter; the average reader can read it for the former.

Again, could a book dealing with similar material to *The Lover,* reset in America — a fifteen year old girl having a torrid affair with an older Oriental man — have been published for teenagers? Not a chance. Would it have trouble finding a publisher, much less an audience, as an adult book? Definitely. The foreign setting, the exotic background of Indochina, allowed a quite fine book to slip in under the wire.

10

I want to return to the subject of my own books because I can speak with much greater authority about how they came to be than I can about anyone else's. I'm not going to deal here with the many books I've written about eleven and twelve year olds, such as *Mom, the Wolf Man and Me* and *Robbie and the Leap Year Blues,* though these are sometimes inaccurately called young adult novels. I want to deal with the books that have caused problems for me, the older teenage books in which the male or female protagonist is usually eighteen and in the last year of high school: *It's Okay if You Don't Love Me, Love is One of the Choices, Domestic Arrangements, Beginner's Love,* and *Give and Take.*

I have to confess that I wrote the first of these novels, *It's Okay if You Don't Love Me,* as an answer or an alternative to Judy Blume's *Forever.* Judy and I are friends; our work is often compared. We had discussed for years the idea of writing a young adult novel about a teenage love affair which includes a modicum of the explicit sexuality that has long been a staple of adult fiction. Judy did it first and I was miffed, but I reasoned, correctly, I think, that there are always many different ways to approach the same subject. The heroine of *It's Okay* is more of a rebel and an iconoclast than Katherine in *Forever*; she comes from a less typical American family: her mother has been married and divorced twice and is living with a man. She lives in an urban, not a suburban setting, and finally, she is the one who is not a virgin and who takes the sexual initiative with her boyfriend, Lyle. My editor loved the book but decided to do with it what Judy's editor had done with *Forever*: publish it as an adult book. I doubt either *Forever* or *It's Okay* has been read by many adults outside the children's book field for the same reason: Judy and I had already established ourselves as writers for young adults. It was teenagers who sought the books out; both books have done consistently well in paperback. Both books also fit into the young adult genre in one structural sense: they are told in the first person and are roughly two hundred pages long.

In my second book of this kind, *Love is One of the Choices* (a dreadful title for which I apologize; I truthfully can't remember who thought of it) I wanted to break out of this structure. I wrote the book in the third person. It was considerably longer, and it was told from two points of view. I felt, as long as these books were to be published for adults, why not make it a real adult book — that is, edited by the adult department and brought forth by them. To that end, I showed it first to an editor I had worked with on my "real" adult novels. He turned it down, gently, but firmly. Basically he just didn't like it, but also, he suggested gently, perhaps it was not an adult book, but a young adult. Okay, I was disappointed, but I wanted to get the book in print. My children's book publisher accepted it, but offered me the same small advance I had received for *It's Okay.* I decided to try and look elsewhere for a better advance since *It's Okay* had received an excellent paperback sale and (a fact which editors often overlook) writers have the same desire to eat three times a day as the people in other professions. My agent offered *Love is One of*

the Choices to, perhaps, four other children's book publishers and all of them turned it down as "too adult" or, that most damning of terms, "it falls between two stools." Horrified, I slunk back to my original publisher, accepted the low offer and set about revising it. The book came to about 300 pages. I was told to cut 100 pages. "Why? Where?" I wanted to know. The answer was that since it was now deemed a young adult book, though it would be published as an adult book like *It's Okay*, it couldn't be longer than 200 pages. Those were "the rules."

Being told "those are the rules" is not the best way to appeal to me, but I also felt, since the book had been turned down by several places, I wasn't in a position to give much flak to my editor. Instead, I turned to one of my best friends who happens also to be a writer in the field and said, "I'm stumped. They want 100 pages cut and they haven't given me any idea where." My friend performed a generous and noble service. She reread the book and simply put a fine line next to any passages she thought were extraneous. These cuts came to about 30 or 40 pages. I made the changes she suggested, handed the manuscript in and no one seemed to remember that the original suggestion had been for twice as many cuts. What bewilders me about this "rule," which is still alive and well in 1985, is that the kids who read these books are often, simultaneously, reading Steven King, *Gone with the Wind* and *Clan of the Cave Bear*, which weigh in at at least a thousand pages. Is there some magic year or month where teenagers, formerly only capable of reading a 200 page manuscript, can take on five times that amount without blinking an eye?

Love is One of the Choices met with roughly the same fate as *It's Okay*: an excellent paperback sale and an enthusiastic response by teenage readers. Despite being published for adults, as with the earlier book (both, by the way, were published in paperback for young adults), I doubt it had more than a dozen adult readers.

This was getting silly, I thought. Why publish these books for adults when everyone, including the publisher, knew they were going to be read by teenagers? Two reasons, I was told. One is that, in hardcover, young adult books will not be stocked by bookstores. The reason is simple. Teenagers buy their books and they don't like hardcovers. I think that, even if hardcovers cost the same amount as paperbacks, most teenagers would buy paperbacks. Then, one might ask, why bend oneself out of shape to get bookstores to stock hardcover books if no one is going to buy them? I've never received an answer to that one. The other reason for publishing young adult books as adult books has to do with the reviewing media. The amount of sexual detail in books like *It's Okay* is so small compared to other adult books that, when reviewed as such, it is scarcely remarked upon. When reviewed or referred to in children's book journals, such books are reviled as being pornographic. Any editor would rather the book he has invested in publishing get good reviews. Hence: publish it for adults.

Yet, stubborn as I was then, I was still determined to find a way around

this. I decided, with my next similar book, *Domestic Arrangements,* to publish it with a publisher who had no young adult line. I decided to make it even longer, to make the sexual detail even more explicit. My goal was to write a novel with a teenage heroine that would be accepted by the world at large as an adult book. I published *Domestic Arrangements* with M. Evans who has no adult line. My editor there, who had no knowledge or interest in the young adult field, regarded it as, simply, an adult book. He placed large ads, but all of them showed a teenage girl as the centerpiece. The result? Exactly the same as with *It's Okay* or *Love is One of the Choices:* an excellent paperback sale, and the book was read by no adult readers.

Yes, I do believe that this problem, if one can call it such, was aggravated in my case by my being established as an author of young adult books. That is my image, my public persona. Even when I write a book in which all the main characters are over thirty, the marketing people, as one of them put it to me recently, have to work hard to "overcome my image of a young adult writer." I've begun to feel it's like a criminal record that follows me around from place to place.

As I said earlier, if this were a case of "separate but equal," I would not be upset. I am earning, from these books, far more than the vast majority of writers of adult fiction earn. As my husband has often pointed out, with this money we have been able to buy and maintain a country house, raise and clothe two teenage daughters whose annual consumption of rock records is considerable. So I am not biting the hand that feeds me. But, like most writers, I do not live by bread alone. I hate and will always hate the sneering smiles or remarks I receive at parties about my books for teenagers, especially since most of the people who make these remarks have never read any of my books or any young adult books at all. They don't have to, they assume they're junk.

I tried one more ploy: writing the same kind of book from a male viewpoint. I'd gradually become aware of the dearth of excellent fiction about teenage boys, perhaps because so many writers for the field are women, and thought I might try and provide some. Yes, I love *The Catcher in the Rye,* but it's one book and very little of it has to do with the hero's relationships with girls his own age. I wrote *Beginner's Love.* Same story: published as an adult book in hardcover, an excellent paperback sale, no adult readers.

The last example I'll give you has a twist. Some years back I read an article in the *New York Times,* or perhaps it was *Mother Jones,* on sperm banks. I recall one unnamed young man in his twenties who seemed to lead a rather lonely life, but who regularly showed up at the sperm bank. This was, as it were, his only social life. I conceived, if you'll pardon the pun, the idea of a book about a young man who is a virgin, who is terrified of real women, but who has a fantasy of impregnating all the women in his home town. The hero of my book is eighteen and about to leave for college. I showed the book, *The Donor,* to a children's book editor I had

worked with, and she accepted it. I was surprised when she said she thought the sperm bank theme would not be a problem, though she wanted it cut back. She intended to publish it as a young adult book. Amazing. Maybe there could be progress after all. A month or two before publication I was informed that a change had been made: *The Donor,* now rechristened *Give and Take* on the ground that "we don't want to call undue attention to the sperm bank theme," was now going to be an adult book. Nothing on the book jacket even mentioned the hero's going to the sperm bank. In short, it was being done as an adult book, yet with the same nervousness about sexual details that only comes from children's book departments. The novel would not, I was told, even be displayed at ALA because it wasn't "really a y.a.," but then neither was it displayed anywhere else because the adult department, as with the other books I've described, didn't know it existed.

We all know people who go through life making the same mistakes, bemoaning them again and again, seeming to take good advice, and then going right back and setting up the same situation with the same dire results. It's this that keeps psychoanalysts, as my father was, in business. I don't want to be one of these people, and as of now I have to say that I've given up parts of the struggle I've described, but not all. I hope that I will never again let a book such as *It's Okay* or *Beginner's Love* be published as an adult book when it isn't. I will not expect any of these books ever to be read by anyone other than teenagers, particularly teenage girls. I will accept the fact that none of these books, no matter how long I work on it, no matter what its degree of literary quality, will ever be seriously reviewed. I think what I will do, though, is perhaps not to try and squeeze all my book ideas, or most of them, into the young adult mold. *Give and Take,* for instance, I now feel should really have been about a young man out of college, in his twenties. I am going to allow my main characters to be either in college or somewhere under thirty. I don't know if this stems from an awareness that many of the kids who read me in junior high are now out in the world, working, or just a desire to gain for myself greater freedom from many of these restrictions.

Accepting some of these facts makes me sad. But I am an *engagé* pessimist. I don't want to leave the field. I want to go on writing books that young people respond to. And I suppose deep down I hope a time may come, though I'm not counting on it, when I see the field which involves so much of my time and interest, accepted as separate, but equal.

TWO RECENT FILMS ON CENSORSHIP

Books Our Children Read

Books Our Children Read, funded in part by the Ohio Humanities Council (under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities) and the Ohio Arts Council, provides an impartial but probing treatment of the complexities surrounding book censorship. Focusing on the Fort Frye Local School District in southeastern Ohio, the film explores the logic and beliefs of the parents who want certain books banned, the parents who disapprove of censorship, the teachers, and finally, the feelings of the students most affected by the decisions being made for them.

> You have to say: I'm proud of my values and I want you to have the same values.
> —Parent

> We don't want a parent or a few parents to impose their value system on everyone else. At the same time, we want to respect their values.
> —Teacher

The problem began when teacher Alan Stacy received several complaints regarding a book — *A Day No Pigs Would Die* by Robert Newton Peck — he was teaching to his junior high students. The complaints leveled against the book were that it included objectionable language and offensively explicit details and that it dealt with inappropriate subjects for a classroom.

Books Our Children Read objectively presents all the local participants in the debate. The teachers at the Beverly school invited all concerned parents to meet and discuss their differing attitudes about *A Day No Pigs Would Die.* This documentation of the attitudes of the parents and teachers provides the viewer the rare opportunity to evaluate the conflicting sides of the same issue, exploring the value of literature in education and human experience while demonstrating the resolution of conflict through open communication.

As *Books Our Children Read* progresses, we see and hear worried parents, rural people from America's heartland, express their common fear that their children are being introduced to too much too soon. Their children are growing up too swiftly, and these parents want very much to slow down this process. The parents want to make certain their children learn traditional values along with, or prior to, learning about all the new options the world offers.

> The same kind of concerns that parents feel here are the concerns that parents feel everywhere. They're anxious about their children becoming adults in such an imperfect world.
> —Teacher

While these same parents also mention concerns about another book, *Forever,* popular with many teenagers, other parents argue that the exposure to such books, if under adult guidance, might be of value to their children. And throughout, though they listen to and consider each parent's opinion, the teachers maintain that, while a book may be wrong for a few students, this fact must not be allowed to determine the fate of the book for all students.

Books Our Children Read clearly presents all sides of the question of book censorship. The film does not offer neat answers, but probes the different points of view and their underlying assumptions and beliefs. Book censorship can affect all of us; this film is recommended for all to improve awareness of one of the most basic American rights: freedom to read.

By Michelle Marder Kamhi. *Special Merit Award — Athens, International Film Festival*

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Books Under Fire

This vital and thought-provoking documentary shows how the *Merrian-Webster New Collegiate Dictionary* was rejected for use in Texas, reveals how a complaint from one parent in Maine led to the banning of *365 Days,* Ronald Glasser's powerful memoir of the Vietnam War, and examines the implications of these events.

Examining the censorship movement in the United States today, *Books Under Fire* presents the viewpoints of both sides of the controversy. Interviewed are Vietnam veterans who demonstrated against the banning of *365 Days,* as well as the mother whose complaint led to the ban, parents, community leaders, and students who express their opinions for and against banning the book.

Textbooks as well as library books are under fire. The film includes a profile of self-appointed censors Mel and Norma Gabler of Texas, who have become a major force in the drive to rid schools of textbooks that do not conform to conservative political and religious views.

The opinions of the Gablers carry a great deal of weight with the Texas Adoption Commission, which holds public hearings where Texans can voice their objections to textbooks. Since the state of Texas spends $50 million

on textbooks annually, if the Texas Commission asks for content changes, publishers admit that changes are made in textbooks distributed nationally. As a result, what children read across the country is heavily influenced by what sells in Texas — and by the opinions of powerful conservatives like the Gablers.

Freedom of expression is guaranteed to all Americans by the First Amendment. Yet censorship is among the most critical issues facing schools and libraries today. A national and incisive investigation of an inflammatory subject, *Books Under Fire,* is essential viewing for Contemporary Issues classes, librarians, educators, parents and students. (Bennett-Watts Productions)

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The Matter of Britain IV: The Welsh Theme

A study tour of children's and young adult literature in Britain, with a special focus on Wales, will be offered July 13 - 27, 1986. The itinerary includes the Vale of the White Horse; Vath and its many literary associations; the Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagans; the Dylan Thomas country of Swansea and Laugharne; the Welsh National Center for Children's Literature and the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth; castles of northern Wales; the medieval city of Chester; Stratford-on-Avon and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre; and the riches of the city of London. Authors, illustrators, and critics will speak en route. Options include a London tour only and/or attendance at the International Reading Association's World Congress in London, July 28-31. Directors are Mary Lou White (Dayton, Ohio) and Mary Lou Colbath (Orono, Maine). Contact: STORYTOUR, College of Education and Human Services, 376 Millett Hall, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435.

Random Notes from a Midnight Censor

Gayle Greeno

After an author finishes the creation of a work, a publisher brings it to the reading public. Gayle Greeno, Director of Marketing for New American Library, known, among many other publications, for its books for young adults, looks at censorship from the publisher's perspective.

Before we automatically point our fingers at the censors and hiss, "Shame, shame, you have violated the First Amendment rights!", let's be honest and look at who some of the censors really are. Walter Kelly's Pogo was right when he said, "We has met the enemy, and it is us."

In all fairness, let the finger point first at me, and I shall tell you how I began my inadvertent career as a "censor" or "one of them."

It started when I became Educational Promotion Manager at Fawcett/Popular Library and was assigned the task of producing an educational catalog for junior and senior high schools, colleges, and public libraries. Adoption materials and leisure reading, reference books and mystery and western series — there was something for everyone in that catalog. But not all books automatically belonged in every market. One book in particular made me nervous, edgy about its impact on teen readers; one book compelled me to add a personal comment to the annotation. The book was Richard Adams' *The Plague Dogs,* and my comment read: "*Note*: Explicit descriptions of experiments on animals may disturb some Young Adult readers."

Acknowledging one's prejudices is difficult; going beyond the act of acknowledgement and overcoming the prejudice is even more so. For me, the scenes of animal experimentation, vivisection, were so powerfully nightmarish and disturbing that I felt compelled to warn others about them. But why didn't I feel compelled to warn about overt sex scenes or gory violence between humans in other titles in the catalog? Each of us has his or her own personal "sticking point," and that was mine. Did I have a right to make a statement like that in the catalog, or is it up to the teachers, the librarians, the young adult readers themselves to make that decision? Is it possible that I prejudiced things by saying what I did and that I may have made too strong a case against the book, causing potential readers to avoid it?

But if, that time, I dipped only a tentative toe in the murky waters of censorship issues, I admit that I dove straight in — with full innocence — when I went to New American Library. The issue: special bookclub editions. Some background on bookclubs may be in order here.

Some of you know the school bookclubs well — you've seen the colored flyers and handed them out to your students, collected the funds, distributed the books. What you may not have thought about is the book selection process that goes on before you see the flyer's monthly offerings. Two key words apply to the selection process: "safeness" and "saleability."

The last thing the clubs can afford to do is to offer a book that offends a parent because the money for the books comes from the parent. Bookclub mailings criss-cross the country: urban, suburban, and rural, middle-American and big cities, sophisticated regions and Bible belt sections of the land. And many parents believe, rightly or wrongly, that any book offered by the club is appropriate for their children. The children across the country aren't necessarily homogenous, but the books had better be. One complaint about a book, and the club may be banned — not just from that particular classroom, but from the whole school or school district.

Bookclub sales also have a real financial impact on my sales budget, my company's overall sales, and the author's royalty statement. Bookclub sales are *nonreturnable,* so a major sale of 25,000 or 50,000 or 100,000 copies guarantees us "x" number of dollars in the bank without the worry of potential returns (which sometimes are at a level of 50%) eating into our profits. Authors too know that a bookclub sales means significant additional royalties. Few authors make their entire living from their earnings as writers, especially those writing for the children's or YA markets. Many authors consider themselves lucky to earn $5,000 a year from their writing. The royalties earned on a bookclub sale can wipe out or help wipe out the advance monies an author must earn back for the company before he or she actually starts to receive royalties on the book. A club sale of 100,000 copies means a royalty payment of roughly $6,000 to $8,000 (depending on the book's cover price) — a year's literary earnings in one fell swoop.

With this in mind, I received a call from a club editor who informed me that she really liked one of our titles (the book and author shall remain nameless), but it did contain two "objectionable" phrases. Would we consider a special edited edition for the club? The phrases in question were "riding hell-bent for leather" and "Goddamn you, why'd you ruin everything?" at the climatic scene in the book. Only after consultation with and permission from the author did we make those two changes in the bookclub edition.

Were we right in doing this? Do I regret it? In retrospect, my answer is Yes and No. I personally regret that at this point I wasn't smart enough or lacked the foresight to include a line on the copyright page saying that this was a special edited bookclub edition. I don't regret the sale because, crass as it sounds, it helped my budget. Nor do I feel that the deletions or changes in wording affected the impact or the integrity of the book. Because of those changes this worthwhile title had a chance to reach a greater audience than it could before.

I do worry that financial considerations may have played a part in the author's decision to agree to the changes, and I worry even more that

authors may be forced into self-censorship as they strive to second-guess what "big buyers" want or will accept. This obviously holds a chilling potential for stifling an author's creativity and ability to write honestly and honorably.

Finally, I may have left school librarians in jeopardy since they did not know that the club edition differed from our regular paperback edition and the hardcover edition. What if a librarian put a copy of the edited edition next to the original edition and someone discovered "objectionable" words in one version and not in the other?

What would I have done if the bookclub had asked for major deletions and/or revisions that substantially altered the book's plot or point? I hope I would have said No, but the decision would not have been totally mine to make. If the author were to agree, I might have no choice. Luckily for all, the issue of edited bookclub editions has cooled down substantially since the Young Adult Services Division of the American Library Association brought the situation to the public's attention a few years ago. Edited editions are quite rare now, but I sometimes wonder who the losers really are. Leaving my mercenary thoughts aside, sometimes the students are the losers because they may never discover a particularly thought-provoking, interesting book since a few swear words make it impossible for the club to offer it.

What the bookclub edition issue has done is not to remove the problem of censorship but to move or push it back a step where it's not as obvious or easy to see. When I sit up late at night reading a YA manuscript, I compulsively scribble notes to the editor: "Page 39 — can we delete the word 'shit'? Good potential for school use and club use, but not with that word in it!" Similar thoughts must cross the editor's mind when he or she reads the manuscript. And what thoughts are crossing the author's mind as the words are written?

For that matter, what thoughts are crossing Shakespeare's mind (so to speak) at the discovery that approximately 400 lines of *Romeo and Juliet* have been deleted from certain school literature anthologies? Even classic literature is not immune as modern-day Bowdlers create their own versions more than 150 years after Bowdler's own special "family" edition of Shakespeare. Did textbook publishers jump the gun in doing this? Were complaints being registered with them from outraged parents and "Gableresque" groups? And what were the teachers doing while all this was happening?

We publishers aren't the only other set of bad guys out there. Let me point a finger for just a moment at you, the teachers and librarians reading this. Remember, "We has met the enemy, and it is us." You are a part of the censorship problems as well.

I have attended the national meetings of the National Council of Teachers of English, the International Reading Association, and the American Library Association since 1979. Do you have any idea how disheartening it is to have someone come up to me and say, "Well, what do you have that's

stimulating, something really meaty and relevant that deals with today's issues as they relate to teens — but it has to be clean, no swear words, and nothing controversial. I live in a conservative community and I can't take the chance on upsetting someone." This is not an unusual request; I hear it far more often than I'd like to.

Many of you are cautious, concerned, or sometimes downright scared. Given the local and school politics and power struggles that go on in some places, I don't necessarily blame you. Still, the anonymous "someone" wields an amazing amount of power in communities across the land. Sometimes that "someone" may not even exist. It's rather like the jokes about God's existence: "If He does exist, I don't want to offend Him," says the atheist.

Because of your fears, some of you are engaging in a pre-selection policy that automatically excludes a number of worthwhile books; you are pre-censoring before you even begin. So you will go on teaching the same old safe, predictable books that bored you the first time, that bored your students fifteen years ago, and that bore yet another class of captive students this year. But look out, because that nice, safe, predictable book just may offend "someone" tomorrow on grounds that you never thought of — and then what will you do?

Each time one of you decides not to make waves, not to take a chance on a new and possibly controversial book, what message do you send to publishers? We read your message in our sales figures: Don't bother to publish something real and true and open to debate or various interpretations, because we don't dare buy it. And if you don't buy it, how can we afford to publish it and keep it in print for the hardy few who dare?

In September we will publish Hadley Irwin's *Abby, My Love,* selected by the Young Adult Services Division of the American Library Association as a Best Book and by the Children's Book Council as a Notable Book in the Field of Social Studies. It is, as you may know, a sensitive and perceptively told story about incest. Reviewing it in the Fall 1985 issue of the ALAN Review, Joan F. Kaywell commented that is was "exceptionally well-written, extraordinarily insightful and *definitely teachable.*" (The italics are mine.) She continues, "I believe that this book is powerful enough to give help and hope to sexually abused children and promotes awareness of this little discussed issue."

How many of you will have the courage to discuss the issue privately with students, should the need arise? How many of you will teach this book or others on an equally difficult or controversial subject? I suspect that a poll by show of hands versus a secret ballot might have dissimilar results.

School librarians find themselves in the same predicament about pre-censorship, perhaps even more so than their counterparts in public libraries. It's not difficult for a school librarian to rationalize along the following lines: Our school library is basically a curriculum resource center, meant to provide students with reference materials and resources to supplement

and enhance their studies. The public library can buy the "controversial" titles, titles that broaden a student's general learning experience, so there's no need for us to replicate the titles in the public library collection. And we really do need a new atlas.

But what if the public library isn't easily accessible to students because of its location or hours? Or what if the public library suffers from limited funds? According to the figures from the R.R. Bowker Company, nearly *three-quarters* of the main public libraries in the U.S. have yearly book funds of *less than $10,000.* Nearly 3,000 main public libraries have book budgets of less than $1,000! Those limited funds must provide books of interest to *all* members of the community, not just young adults. One can't always depend on the public library to provide the books that schools may be uneasy about purchasing.[1]

The question of censorship in schools, school libraries, and public libraries takes on a new twist when it comes from the liberal side, bent on revisionism or rewriting the past. About a year ago I contacted a respected Children's Librarian at a public library because we were debating publishing some of the Hugh Lofting *Doctor Dolittle* books. (I fondly remember the hours of pleasure these books gave me as a child. I read and reread them, became a friend of Tommy Stubbins and the good doctor, and was enchanted with the Pushmi-pullyu, and the giant snail that submarined Dr. Dolittle and his friends to the ocean's floor.) I asked the librarian if these books would still be of interest to today's children and pre-teens. She replied that she certainly believed they were and that she would consider purchasing them if they were available in inexpensive editions. However, she continued, we really ought to think about doing something about the racist, imperialistic tone of these books. Had we considered having them edited to overcome these problems?

I alternated between grinning and fuming when I hung up the phone. Censorship is not censorship when it's done to correct past "errors" in history as suggested by a liberal librarian. Racism and imperialism are unacceptable and unenlightened by today's standards but, given the context in which the books were written, not exactly unlikely in the work of an Englishman writing during the 1920s. As *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* notes, "This (racism) was certainly a misjudgement on Lofting's part, the result of the first book's debt to Belloc and other humorists in that vein, and is not characteristic of the series as a whole." I do not consciously remember being irrevocably prejudiced or scarred by this early exposure to racism. Would today's children be hurt by it? I honestly don't know. Perhaps we don't always give children and pre-teens the honor of acknowledging their ability to separate the proverbial wheat from the chaff in what adults say or write.

Of course, if you're speaking of liberal revisionism from educators or concerned parents, the obvious choice — and one of our most complained-about titles — is *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* The issues, pro and con, have been debated in numerous articles in both the popular and

scholarly media. I have written impassioned letters to teachers and librarians to help them defend their use of *Huck Finn*. Can you change history to pretend that that period in history never happened, that people were never bought and sold as slaves, that the word "nigger" was not a common term? It is a part of our heritage, a shameful part, but our heritage whether we are black or white.

Some adult readers still fail to hear the message that Twain tried and is still striving to deliver each time someone reads *Huck Finn*: Every person is a being of worth and value and has human dignity. Huck discovers that message even though it goes against the "moral" precepts he has absorbed. If children in their early teens (like Huck) can see through the humbuggery, revel in the discovery of irony and satire, why can't some adults see it? Perhaps some of you should consider "remedial" classes for adults lacking these abilities.

If it's a question of being kicked while you're down, I should note that a few years ago we commissioned a new cover for our *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. This handsome painting shows Huck sitting on the corner of his raft and holding a corncob pipe in his hand. Yes, I've received a complaint from a teacher that we are promoting smoking because of the pipe. I'm waiting with bated breath for a complaint about the original Tenniel drawing we now use on the cover of our *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. It shows Alice standing and talking to the Caterpillar who is, heaven forbid, smoking a hookah. Signet Classics promotes drug addiction! It's easy to laugh when you read this — it's not always easy to laugh when you're on the receiving end of the irate letters. You've probably received similar ones as well.

What makes many publishers ultra-sensitive to the problems of censorship at the moment are the various anti-pornography laws passed in different townships, cities, and states, including Virginia. Some originate with liberal groups; others come from the conservative faction. Many of the laws are vaguely worded and open to an incredibly wide range of subjective interpretations. As Chief Justice Stewart once remarked when he tried to define pornography, "I know it when I see it."

We publish well over 600 titles a year, including paperback reprints of hardcover titles as well as original mass market and trade paper and our own original hardcovers. What should we (or any publisher) tell legal counsel to look for in "vetting" these books? Whose standards determine what is obscene or pornographic, and what should we look for and what should we omit? Should our distributors (bookstores, newsstands, jobbers, etc.) who resell our books to the public be held accountable for reading and judging whether or not they dare sell our books? Or is the publisher answerable if an account sells something that is later deemed obscene? Do we and our distributors have a responsibility to make sure that only adults come in contact with certain books? Or is it easiest to "muzzle" our authors and tell them to write nothing that could be construed as faintly "suspect"?

And that, of course, is only regarding books with potentially "pornographic" scenes. What about books that discuss or promote values or opinions other than safe, middle-of-the-road ones? If a book for teenagers discusses a teen's battles and misunderstandings with his parents, is the book paving the way for the destruction of the American family? If a book discusses — or doesn't discuss — abortion as an alternative to an unwanted pregnancy, is it right or wrong? Year after year, reports show that more and more books are coming under fire for reasons discussed above and many other possibilities. Each year the number of formally registered complaints rises.

My goal in what I've written so far has been to try to make us all acknowledge that the problems of censorship are not always clear-cut or easy decisions to make or to avoid. We all bear the burden of looking at our own motivations in an honest yet compassionate way. What we see in ourselves can often be seen in others even though we may not agree with their views. Censorship is not a black-or-white issue but a problem of varying shades of gray. I'm good at posing questions even if not at providing answers. Our First Amendment rights are crucial to all of us — publishers, teachers, librarians, parents, students. But there are no easy answers; if there were, we probably would not have needed to create the First Amendment. Now it's up to us to uphold these rights to the best of our ability.

Note

1. Budgets for public high school libraries are not broken out in the same manner as Bowker's public library figures. However, information obtained from Market Data Retrieval, one of the largest mailing list companies for the school market, shows that there are slightly over 13,500 public high school (9-12, 10-12) libraries. Of these, about 40% spend over $6.00 per student on library materials, with $6.00 being considered as "high spending." Another 12% are "average spending," or $5.00-$6.00 per student, while 48% of the school libraries are "low spending," or less than $5.00 per student.

Much Ado About Textbooks: The Cleansing of the Bard as Seen By a State Board Member

Margaret S. Marston

Recently, Margaret Marston raised her voice against the unacknowledged censorship of works of literature in textbooks. A member of the Virginia Board of Education and of the National Committee on Excellence in Education, she pointed to passages from the plays of Shakespeare, as well as from other authors' works, that had been left out of textbook versions without notes to that effect and called for a national commission to study the problem.

The historian Arnold Toynbee after studying the sweep of recorded history decided that civilizations generally decline not so much because of attacks from without but from a hardening of ideas within. Throughout most of our history, Americans have been free to explore new ideas, to chase truth wherever it led. When our country was being formed in the crucible of ideas, John Adams wrote, "Let us . . . cherish, therefore, the means of knowledge. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write. . . ." Indeed, the freedom to teach, to learn, and to express ideas without fear of censorship is a fundamental right held by public school teachers and students as well as all other citizens. These freedoms, guaranteed in the First Amendment, must be preserved in the classroom in our society of diverse beliefs and shared freedom.

Certainly textbooks have played a vital role in education. Researchers have found that textbooks are the "primary determinants of what is taught in U.S. classrooms" (Farr and Tulley, p. 467). Estimates of the amount of emphasis placed on the textbook as a primary resource in instruction vary from 75 percent to as high as 90 percent of the pupil's classroom time (Kirst, p. 18). This foundation places the use of textbooks in a central role as a major resource in teaching and learning. Teachers have an obvious interest in the content and quality of the textbooks in use in their classrooms. Currently, there is widespread interest in the process used to select and adopt textbooks. Textbook adoptions have been conducted at the state level in Virginia since the beginning of the public school system. Twenty-one other states have state-level adoption procedures similar to those in Virginia. Successive Virginia Constitutions have designated the Board of Education as the final decision maker in the selection of textbook materials. The Code of Virginia and Regulations of the Board have supported this authority and have provided specific instructions for implementation.

However, in 1984-85, there were "documented censorship incidents in 46 of the 50 states. More than 42 percent of the challenges that were directed

at instructional materials resulted in removal or restriction of the material" (People for the American Way, p. 1).

The Board's active involvement in the issue of censorship in textbooks began in December, 1984, when, as a Board of Education member, I voiced my extreme dismay over the discovery that publishers were cutting lines from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. Having served as a member of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, I was aware of and had been concerned about the widespread "dumbing down" of textbooks in our schools. But the cleansing of the Bard came as a surprise to me when I received a call from a Fairfax County parent who told me that textbook publishers were cutting lines from Shakespeare's work. An accompanying teacher's guide, however, contained no indication that any language had been altered.

Soon I discovered that Shakespeare was in good company. Others on the list of censored authors included Mark Twain, John Steinbeck, Shirley Jackson, James Baldwin, and Judy Blume. Even Thomas Jefferson had felt the sting of censorship when a recent textbook omitted the word "unalienable" from the printing of the Declaration of Independence.

Immediately after learning of these omissions, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, S. John Davis, sent a letter to each of the state's school divisions warning of censorship in the English literature texts. In addition to Dr. Davis' statement, the Board of Education also requested an investigation of the extent of the bowlderizing of Shakespeare in the textbooks used in Virginia.

This study found that all but one of the publishers indicated that certain parts of text had been expurgated. These publishers indicated that notation of some type was made in the teacher's manual, although many conceded these notations were often vague and appeared in difficult to find locations. This study led to a meeting in July, 1985, between the Board and publishers from across the country. The Board indicated that, for textbooks sold in Virginia, expurgation of any text must be clearly noted. The publishers in attendance agreed that this could and would be done for future editions of textbooks sold in Virginia.

After extensive discussion, the Board adopted recommendations for improving the quality of textbooks used in the Commonwealth. The Board called for an independent regional consortium on textbooks. This consortium should pay particular attention to the expurgation and "dumbing down" of textbooks in all subjects. Members of the Board and Department of Education participated in a national conference on this issue and have been working jointly to establish a regional consortium. These efforts resulted in the convening of a conference held on March 25 in Atlanta, Georgia. As Virginia's representative, I chaired the conference, which was attended by five additional Southern states. This is a small, but necessary, first step as states join together to convince publishers that quality does in fact sell textbooks.

Beginning in the fall of 1985, members of the Department of Education

staff were trained in developing and using evaluative criteria which reflected the latest research in selecting textbooks of the highest quality. The training was part of several related services provided by the Educational Products Information Exchange Institute (EPIE). The scope of work provided by EPIE included training Department of Education personnel in using the evaluative criteria; designing a training session for the 1986 state textbook selection committee; designing a training program for use by local school division personnel; and designing teleconferences to disseminate information and to provide training regarding the selection and proper use of textbooks.

In May of 1986, the Board of Education and Department of Education jointly will sponsor a two-day workshop for state and local school board members; Department of Education staff; and representatives from Virginia school divisions, colleges and universities, and professional and lay organizations, as well as scholars in the subject fields, journalists, and publishers' representatives. The focus will be on exploring in depth the current issues and concerns and forming a cooperative agenda for better textbooks. It is estimated that approximately 250 people will attend.

Throughout 1986, Department of Education staff in social studies, language arts, foreign languages, and science will begin working with state and national professional organizations and others to establish a consensus of what should be expected in quality textbooks. When completed, the staff will present written specifications for textbooks in each subject area to the Board of Education. After Board approval, publishers will be notified of what Virginia will expect in textbooks in future adoptions. Since our current adoption cycle calls for the review of mathematics and health textbooks during 1986, textbook evaluation committees for these two subject areas will meet this coming summer. These committees will review the latest textbook research and literature and receive training in using evaluative criteria. These committees will then review the textbooks submitted for adoption and present their recommendations to the Board of Education.

One of the most interesting projects is the development of a two-hour teleconference, designed to present the adopted textbooks to teachers statewide. Included will be discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the adopted textbooks. This will be developed and aired in January or February of 1987. A second two-hour inservice teleconference will be designed to demonstrate how to use textbooks properly in instruction. This teleconference will be developed and aired during the spring of 1987.

My point of view is that one of the main goals of the Board of Education is to alert the public to the problems of textbook censorship and quality. We seek the advice of teachers and administrators and are open to ideas and solutions. I urge all teachers to become involved. As teachers, look at the textbooks you are using and give your ideas to the Board. Together, as a state community, we can make a difference.

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WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER

The *Writing Lab Newsletter* is intended as an informal means of exchanging information among those who work in writing labs and language skills centers. Brief articles (four to six typed pages) describing labs, their instructional methods and materials, goals, programs, budgets, staffing, services, etc. are invited. For those who wish to join the newsletter group, a donation of $5 to help defray duplicating and mailing costs (with checks made payable to Purdue University, but sent to the address below) would be appreciated. Please send material for the newsletter and requests to join to

Professor Muriel Harris, editor
Writing Lab Newsletter
Department of English
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Indiana 47907

Censorship: The ***** Solution

Karla S. Henthorn

Students, of course, are the ones who are most directly affected by censorship and selection of school materials. Karla Henthorn, now a student at the College of William and Mary, discusses the influences of censorship on her reading in high school.

As a junior in college, I can still remember the many attempts at censorship made by teachers, parents, and publishers during high school. Some of the commonly censored books that I missed at that age are being discussed in my adolescent literature class this semester. Considering both past and present experience with controversial literature for high school students, I feel qualified to speak on the subject of censorship from a student's point of view. Choosing several of these much disputed books to illustrate the arguments, I will present my case against censorship.

During my sophomore year in high school, the American literature class read Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. When I began reading, I thought it was a nice poem, though not particularly interesting. Not interesting, that is, until I came across a row of asterisks signaling an omitted passage. Something unusual! Being a naturally curious sort, I went to the public library and pored over the missing stanzas. Turning back to re-examine the rest of the poem more carefully, I not only realized the reason that the selection had been left out, but discovered a new appreciation for Whitman's careful workmanship. So, the first strike against censorship is that it is impractical; censoring or banning a book will not keep young people from reading it. On the contrary, censoring is a good way to draw attention to a questionable passage and encourage people to seek out an unabridged version.

Not only do efforts at censorship usually fail, but much of the censored material would not come as a shock to high school students. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, for instance, has been heavily criticized for the amount of raw language which Holden, the main character, uses. While encouraging the excessive use of obscene language among students is not a good idea, there is no reason to "protect" them from literature that is otherwise perfectly good. They hear language twice as vulgar walking from class to class in school. There is no keeping reality (be it bad language, teenage pregnancy, or drug abuse) from the eyes of high school students. They have seen it already.

For all my open-minded talk, I wanted to yell "Censor it!" when I read Judy Blume's *Forever* in my adolescent literature class. I felt very uncomfortable about the book. Taking a parent's stand, I wanted to make sure my own fifteen year old high school sophomore of the future would

never see such a book. Then, realizing that I had first read it as a fifth grader and my mother had not known, I decided that taking such a stand was absolutely ridiculous. *Forever* is not a great work of fiction, but it is an important book because adolescents read it. Since preventing high school age people from reading *Forever* is virtually impossible, what can parents and teachers do to insure that their adolescents will not be unduly influenced by the book's blatant sexuality? Parents should communicate their feelings on the subject of sexuality through word and action. They should also make an effort to be open to adolescents' questions and be ready to give good, solid reasons for their opinions. Teachers can continue to do what they have done for a long time: assign essays on Hamlet's tragic flaws. By completing such assignments, students learn to read critically. They learn to question and analyze rather than blindly accept what they read. If students learn to read in this way, there is no book in the realm of adolescent literature which should be of any danger to them.

In conclusion, people should think twice before deciding to censor a book because, in doing so, they deny the chief problem adolescents face. The problem: high school students live in an imperfect world. In censoring a piece of literature, adults can ignore the problems it presents rather than helping and teaching students to solve problems. Adolescence is a time for learning to think for oneself and beginning to cope with the difficulties of the adult world. This growth can be a gradual process and a valuable learning experience provided that young people can explore controversial issues with the guidance of an understanding adult. In this light, censorship can be seen as a disservice to young adults, not as a means of protecting them.

Censorship: Why or Why Not?

Susan B. McLeskey

Another student, Susan B. McLeskey, currently a sophomore at Mount Vernon High School in Fairfax County, gives us her view of the problem through a look at the censorship of Shakespeare's plays.

In publishing the play *Romeo and Juliet* in their textbook *Arrangement in Literature,* Scott, Foresman, and Company shortened and changed some of William Shakespeare's lines. In doing this Scott, Foresman gave no warning and were, therefore, deluding ninth-grade students. They were giving those students the idea that their version was Shakespeare and that what they were reading was all that there was to the play *Romeo and Juliet,* when, in fact, some of the impressions given were not those Shakespeare had in mind. In reading the shortened version, many ninth-grade students felt Mercutio was their favorite character because they thought he was the only believable character, and they enjoyed his playfulness. These students did not read three of the lines of the Queen Mab speech that show Mercutio twisting the fairy creature into a horrible monster and becoming somewhat crude in his descriptions:

> This is the hag, when maids lie on their backs,
> That presses them and learns them first to bear,
> Making them women of good carriage.
> (I, iv, 93-95)

If these lines had been included, these students might not have had the same impression of Mercutio. That impression might have been changed so that they would see Mercutio as someone who takes wild stories and twists them into crude and sometimes morbid tales. He seems more serious than playful in these lines. Here the publishers gave us a different impression than Shakespeare seems to have intended.

Changing those lines, or any lines, was like cutting passages from the scores of Mozart because you think they are trivial or chopping of a cat's tail because it seems to have no use. Even in today's theaters, the director works with the writer and, if changes are made, the play is adapted to meet both their needs. The publishers did not have William Shakespeare there (for obvious reasons) to make sure everything essential to the play was kept. They, therefore, could have made (and I believe they did make) some detrimental changes in the play and the way it is perceived by their readers. In reading this play, or any literary work, we want to see the author's creations. In censorship, we are rewriting the story our own way. Shakespeare had a plan as to how the play could be perceived by his readers; and, unless the publisher's name is directly on the work, he cannot give

himself the right to change it. The author created it, and only he has the right to abridge it, leaving the good and bad intact.

One reason for eliminating certain lines in *Romeo and Juliet* seems to be the sensuality that these lines contain. The publishers obviously felt those lines would somehow corrupt the innocence of ninth-grade students. If the editors at Scott, Foresman find *Romeo and Juliet* sensual enough to be offensive, they should turn on a soap opera for comparison. *Romeo and Juliet* is the tragedy of two young lovers, not a fairy tale, and is definitely no worse in terms of sensual content than a soap. These two kids are married, and they're human. Twelve lines of Juliet's speech are censored for ninth grade readers. All ninth graders in Fairfax County public schools have had sex education three times in their school career. How could a speech offend those students when the most sensual lines are

> Spread thy closed curtain, love-performing night,
> That runaway's eyes may wink, and Romeo
> Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen!
> Lovers can see to do their amorous rites
> By their own beauties, or, if love be blind,
> It best agrees with night. Come, civil night,
> Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
> And learn me how to lose a winning match,
> Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.
> Hood my unman'd blood, bating in my cheeks,
> With thy black mantle; till strange love grown bold,
> Think true love acted simple modesty.
> (III, ii, 5-16)

It is only natural for Romeo and Juliet to be attracted to one another, and why should we hide this from fourteen and fifteen year olds? Changing Romeo's words "I will lie with thee tonight" (V, i, 36) to "I will be with thee tonight" seems trivial. The meaning is the same; and, if Shakespeare had wanted to write "be," he would have. There was very probably a specific reason why he chose the word "lie." In the 1500's "to lie with someone" meant to sleep with them. When he said these words, Romeo thought Juliet was dead. He is referring to the afterlife where he would join Juliet and they could continue their wedding night. They are married after all, and a ninth grade student can realize that.

Shouldn't we also give the teacher a little credit on the subject of censorship? If the teacher feels the class has the maturity for a certain curriculum, shouldn't he be allowed to teach it, intact? Let's put a little trust in student-teacher relationships and realize that, if a teacher has a child who is considering suicide, he's definitely not going to introduce the child to a piece that romanticizes death. Also, the worst likely response to those lines quoted above, from students a teacher feels are emotionally mature, would be a few snickers. My feeling as a student is that my English teacher knows me pretty well. He sees me all the time and knows my personality. I trust my teacher not to expose the class to anything we can't handle and to listen to any troubles if we run into difficulty. That's where

the decisions of curriculum should be made, in the classroom. Every class is unique, and no one who is thousands of miles away can make decisions concerning those students. We must start giving the class the opportunity to see the whole product and let the individual teacher decide how to implement it.

Scott, Foresman was deceiving the students. Our impressions of *Romeo and Juliet* were not those intended by Shakespeare; they were those intended by the publishers. This is not what we, as students, want. We expect to see the author's work. Censorship of this sort is wrong no matter how numerous or few the deletions. As Judy Mann of the *Washington Post* so aptly put it, "If publishers are allowed to edit these lines, Out, out darned spot can't be far behind."

1985 NCTE RESOLUTION ON TEACHER CERTIFICATION

This resolution was prompted by the current practice by school districts throughout the country of hiring teachers on emergency certification. NCTE members pointed out that many of those being hired lack academic and professional preparation for teaching English and the language arts. Proposers of the resolution said that although such practices appear to solve the teacher shortage, they in fact jeopardize effective teaching and learning of English and the language arts. The text of the resolution follows.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English urge local, state and national school board officials and agencies to require that all English language arts teachers be appropriately prepared, qualified, and certified in accordance with NCTE guidelines for teacher preparation and certification.

Will the Real Censors Please Stand Up?

Carolyn Reas

Carolyn Reas believes in the power of what students read in school to influence their lives. She has given time and energy to an organization called CAUSE in order to influence the selection of books for the Roanoke County School system. She explains her position.

Are your parents still living together? If so, are they still in love? Do you feel that sexual intercourse is appropriate for anyone who is in love? Do you feel that petting without outer clothing is appropriate for your age? Do you wish birth control methods were available without your parents' knowing about it? Do you frequently wonder what the sex act is like? What would you do if you were pregnant? (a) tell your parents, (b) get an abortion, (c) commit suicide, (d) other.

These privacy-invading questions were part of a sex survey questionnaire given to an eighth grade girls' class in Family Life Education (sex education). A picture showing four different views of the circumcision of an adult male penis, a frontal 8"x10" picture of a woman's vulva or perineum, two drawings of nude adult male and female bodies showing pubertal changes were given the class. Tampons, Kotex, I.U.D.s, condoms, and contraceptive jellies were passed around the room for the girls to feel and touch. Girls were even asked to write reports on lesbianism, incest, and rape. This was all part of a SIECUS (Sex Information Educational Council United States) and Planned Parenthood pilot program for the Virginia State Curriculum Guidelines for Family Living.

As a nurse and mother of three high school children, I felt that such a "sex ed" program was quite improper. I wrote letters to the editor of the local newspaper to attempt to alert other parents about my concerns. As a result, a parent called me to say that her fifteen-year-old son had just brought home *The Naked Ape* by Desmond Morris and was asked to write a book report for his Humanities class. Many of us read this book in college, but we questioned the teacher's judgment in giving it to a boy just having gone through puberty.

The discovery of the distribution of the anatomically correct dolls "Lil' David" and "Lil' Ruthie" by a reporter from the *Roanoke Times & World-News* became the opening for a group of us parents to bring our concerns to the public. We formed a group called Citizens Against Unacceptable Sex Education — C.A.U.S.E. We participated in radio and television talk shows and debates. The media helped keep our story alive, often by means of ridiculing us, calling us censors, bigots, book burners, witch hunters, little old ladies in tennis shoes, etc., none of which was true. Our organization

does not advocate censorship or book burning. What we have done is to awaken parents to the real censorship that had been going on by the educational establishment over the past 25-30 years. While we parents had been going about our daily lives, the educational elitists had been designing an entirely new curriculum seemingly devoid of morals, ethics, traditional family values, God, patriotism, the free enterprise system, traditional sex roles, motherhood, homemaking, etc.

A new set of values has emerged in educational strategies called "Values Clarification." A junior high school principal called our attention to it when we complained about sex education. He told us to take a look at the Guidance Program materials if we thought sex ed was bad news. One look and we knew an entirely new and alien philosophy had taken the place of the Judeo-Christian philosophy we had known in our schools.

As we searched we found that Values Clarification techniques had infiltrated all types of classes from English Composition to Social Studies. Values Clarification, which had become the fad in the 60's and 70's, promotes a society completely devoid of values. These techniques teach that there are no right or wrong answers to life's dilemmas. Everything is relative, including morals, and there are no absolutes. Values Clarification is based upon situation ethics, and teaches that what is right for someone may not be right for someone else and that we all must be tolerant of wrong behavior even if it infringes on others. Students are taught they should be able to pick and choose their own morals depending on what suits their fancy at any given moment. For example, pre-marital sex is okay as long as the two involved are having a meaningful relationship and are using a form of contraception.

According to Values Clarification, to tell a student that stealing is wrong or that kindness and loyalty are right would be to manipulate and coerce a student. Teachers are warned not to be preachy and never to try to force their values upon the students. The students, according to Values Clarification, must learn to select their own value system. That system may well be completely different from their parents' value system under the guise of this idea of a *changing society*.

William J. Bennett, former Director of the National Humanities Center and currently Secretary of the Department of Education, was quoted in the *American Educator* as follows:

> . . . values education programs are not at all neutral, in subject matter or technique. While they purport to be objective and impartial, they are, in fact, biased toward particular ideologies.
>
> Interestingly, none of the biases I have observed are biased toward conservative values or toward the mixed liberal realism of the founding fathers. Rather they are always biased toward what what one might call the 'trendy' ideologies.
>
> It is certainly legal and constitutionally permissible to be left-wing communitarian or right-wing libertarian or trendy or Woodstockian, but one shouldn't be any of those things when one promised to be neutral. Political values are values, and so is trendyness a value. . . . (*American Education*, Fall 1980:31)

Bennett concludes that Values Clarification programs are "indoctrinative, if covertly so." He is also critical of the games, simulation, and role-playing strategies that educators claim will help students make good choices.

> . . . in the emphasis on games, role-playing, simulations and the like, the assumption is made that one can become a better person by practicing make-believe situations. At best such exercises may disclose possibilities of action not previously considered. . . . At worst, these exercises do not test the character of students because nothing is at stake. . . . There is nothing to them in a moral sense.
>
> Because value educationists view moral life principally as a matter of making decisions about dilemmas in morally pragmatic matters, the ethically significant collapses into the ethically problematic. The problematic approach denies the most important part of morality, which is the development of what used to be called, and can still be called, character — that is dispositions of an habits of mind and heart. (*American Educator* Fall 1980:31-32)

What in the name of education had happened to our public school system? Some few of us were aware that Values Clarification teaching had invaded the universities and colleges. However, we surely felt it had not been adopted in our local schools. In fact, quite a few programs have been rejected by conscientious teachers and administrators themselves; but the typical strategies, which can be spotted a mile away, are found in almost every available textbook today.

A few years ago, Dr. Benjamin Bloom, in collaboration with other professionals, classified behavioral objectives into three categories: Cognitive — the acquiring of knowledge; Psychomotor — adhering to skills and performance; Affective — pertaining to values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and things of this type. What this means to parents is that most, if not all, of our teachers' colleges are currently promoting the affective domain with such programs as Values Clarification and other types of self-awareness programs. The teachers seem to have decreased use of the cognitive approach to education.

The main thrust of public education should be placed on cognitive education, the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Affective education within the Guidance Programs appears to focus on raising self-esteem, encouraging positive peer relationships, and developing decision-making skills. These programs mislead parents into believing that trained counselors will reinforce their home-taught values. Not so. Rather a *new* set of values will be taught the students. For example, encouraging positive peer relationships to most parents means helping students better relate to one another, but really they are trained to become *inter*-dependent rather than *in*dependent of the group. All decisions, all judgments, must be based on the *consensus of the group*.

Such programs state that students will be taught the rudiments of decision-making skills. These sound very good. Parents think that their children will be taught the fundamentals of making sound moral judgments. Not so. It means that students will be trained to make up their *own* minds on any given issue, without the benefit of a set of moral absolutes or any adult guidance.

Self-analysis, self-revelation, and group psychotherapy seem to have invaded the classrooms. Some mental health programs probing students and family beliefs even brand Christian children as mentally ill if they believe in God. Anti-nuclear, unilateral disarmament programs such as the NEA's course *CHOICES* have gone so far as to teach children that America is the aggressor and the cause of world chaos and to fill children with the fear that they might not even live to graduate from high school. This is hardly positive education.

Recently the *Washington Times*, October 7, 1985, carried a significant article by Paul C. Vitz, Professor of Psychology at New York University. He says:

> Religion as an influential force shaping American society has been virtually expunged from social studies and history textbooks used by three-quarters of the nation's public schools.

He found most of the 40 textbooks he reviewed to be devoid of discussion of religious activity. Most books he found had been written, or revised, since the late 1970's. He also found "a clear ideological bias" against traditional family structure and values such as marriage and homemaking and concluded that the textbooks conveyed a "strong liberal bias" in their selection of important and admirable Americans. He stated that all the social studies texts he reviewed "have a strong unisex emphasis" and the reading passages in basic readers engaged in "clear attacks" on traditional sex roles.

In a society which routinely misinterprets the meaning of separation of Church and State, we cannot expect that the public schools should promote a specific morality. But by the same token, these public schools cannot be allowed deliberately to undermine the beliefs of children who come from homes in which God is central. I feel we dare not let a handful of irreligious people gain superior rights to the point of destroying the moral structure which our children have learned at home or in their church.

It has been our opinion that the primary function of the schools is to nurture and develop the intellectual capabilities of the students within the moral and ethical framework of our Constitutional Republic. When the textbook writers and the educational establishment degrade and censor these precepts, our children are the losers. They will be set adrift in a valueless society. We cannot let this happen.

The predicament we find ourselves in did not occur overnight and will not disappear overnight. It will take conscientious effort on the part of teachers, parents, businessmen, professionals — all of us — to reform the educational system.

God has granted this country great freedoms and it is up to us to preserve them. We need to make certain that education passes on our great heritage to the next generation.

A Profile in Censorship

B. G. Raines

Being a superintendent of schools is no easy matter, and being superintendent during a series of censorship controversies could strain the proverbial patience of Job. Bob Raines, now a Professor of Education at Emory and Henry College, discusses his experiences as superintendent in Washington County, Virginia, and reflects on the meaning of those experiences.

Nearly every educator abhors anything that smacks of censorship and feels honor bound to combat it wherever it occurs and in whatever ways are necessary, regardless of the personal and professional consequences. Unfortunately, the issues and implications of censorship are never clear-cut and simple, and the censor is not easy to recognize. Censors or would-be censors are almost never the diabolical fiends that the very mention of the word "censor" conjures up in our minds. The censors of school material are usually perfectly ordinary men and women who view themselves as exemplary parents and citizens or, at the very least, as patriotic, responsible, and caring people whose only motive is to protect their children and defend the Republic. They want to protect their children from what they passionately believe to be evil forces which threaten to confuse and, therefore, corrupt the moral, religious, and political values of their children. To the censor, the issues are clear, the solutions are non-negotiable, and the enemy is easily recognized. To the educator who would fight censorship, it is not that simple.

Over the years I had come to believe that teachers and officials of the public schools must always stand as protectors of the students' right to read and to know and as uncompromising opponents of any effort to abridge these rights. Although I had never really encountered censorship, I knew that, if and when it did surface in our school division, my opposition would be unequivocal and unrelenting. But on March 2, 1974, combatting censorship stopped being an abstract and romantic notion for me. On that day it became frighteningly real. A nervous, angry, and very vocal delegation of parents appeared unexpectedly at the regular meeting of the Washington County, Virginia, School Board to demand that a series of high school literature texts which had been used for two years be removed at once from the schools.

In order to justify and dramatize their concerns, two or three representatives of the group read out-of-context words and phrases from the Ginn and Company *Responding Series*. This was, they contended, evidence enough that these books were unfit for use in public schools. The disembodied vulgarity and profanity we heard sent a shock wave through the meeting. The members of the School Board and the superintendent

and his staff were caught off guard and were dismayed by the reading and by the acrimonious accusations that the schools were teaching children to use this "Godless" language.

In spite of the heated and insistent urging of the delegation and of the members of the press who were present, the School Board finally managed to avoid making a spur of the moment statement. But some response had to be made soon; and, as Deputy Superintendent for Instruction and Acting Superintendent, it became my responsibility to analyze the material in question and to prepare a position statement for the Board's consideration. That was done, and the following explanation and position statement was approved by the Board and was presented to the complainants and to the public at the April School Board meeting:

> One of the important responsibilities given to the professional staff of any school division is the recommendation of instructional materials to be used in the schools. Any such choice of material must be defensible in terms of: (a) its appropriateness for the intended audience, (b) its literary quality, and (c) its potential educational value relative to the objectives the school system has established.
>
> This particular series of textbooks was selected from the Virginia approved list, and is in use in 45 school divisions in the state. The *Responding Series* was adopted by the Washington County School Board upon recommendation of the County Textbook Adoption Committee; this committee was composed of representative teachers, administrators, and patrons. Established and approved procedures were used throughout the adoption process.
>
> It is quite true that certain selections in these books probably should not be used as required reading for all students. Teachers will be asked to exercise good judgment in selecting materials from these texts which they consider to be appropriate for students in their classes. *It will continue to be the operational policy of the Washington County Schools that no student will be required to read books or selections that he and his parents find offensive to their beliefs.* This right will be honored and protected as well as the right of the student to read and to learn.
>
> Any person reading the *Responding Series* in a thoughtful and responsible manner will agree that there are a great many worthwhile selections from classical and contemporary literature included in these texts. As in the evaluation of any piece of literature, words and phrases taken out of context should not be used to condemn the work. Even the Bible would not fare well under this kind of assessment.
>
> After reading the justification prepared by the teachers and looking carefully at the books in question, it is my judgment that this series of books should continue to be used in our instructional program.

The still-furious patrons attended the April School Board meeting in force. They crowded into the small meeting room, standing three or four deep around the walls. Since the March meeting, the group had adopted the name "Concerned Citizens," and strong leadership for the group had emerged. The positions and strategies of the group were consolidated by and around two men: Rev. Tom Williams, a fundamentalist Baptist minister, and Bobby Sproles, a local businessman. Throughout these initial meetings and the ensuing months of controversy, these two men were the voices of the Concerned Citizens. Through their leaders, the Concerned Citizens

rejected the Board's statement as being totally unacceptable and renewed the demand that these books be removed from the schools at once. A new ultimatum presented by the Concerned Citizens stated that all persons responsible for selecting and teaching these books should be fired. Once again, the Board was put in the position of being asked to react at once to demands which were unanticipated and, from the Board's point of view, outrageous.

Mr. Sproles and Mr. Williams began very early on to broaden the original objection, which was limited to vulgar and obscene language, to include the plot and intent of certain selections in the series. Mr. Sproles said at the April, 1974, meeting, "It's not just the words, it's the theory in many of these stories. They present an anti-Christ approach . . . in other words, they're Communist-inspired." He was referring to Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* and Erskine Caldwell's "Indian Summer." A new dimension had been introduced into the conflict; the contention was that the books were being used as devices for deliberately and systematically undermining the morals, the faith, and even the patriotism of the youth of Washington County.

In this April, 1974, meeting, and in every subsequent meeting of the School Board for almost two years, an inordinate amount of time was devoted to what became known to everyone in the community as "the Textbook Controversy." All these sessions were characterized by passionate restatements of the Concerned Citizens' position and by increasingly vehement personal attacks on School Board members and school personnel. The Board's efforts to be reasonable and conciliatory were summarily, consistently, and loudly rejected. Efforts to limit the time allowed for this topic so that other school business could be conducted met with loud and insistent protests that the civil rights of the protestors were being violated. The leaders of the Concerned Citizens cried with righteous indignation that this lack of appropriate response from the School Board was to be expected from the Godless men and women who were determined to subvert the morals of children. A chorus of "Amen, Amen, Brother" always accompanied these statements.

It became increasingly clear to the School Board and school officials that it was not going to be possible to reason with people who had been persuaded that God favored their point of view. The Concerned Citizens clearly believed that such disparate points of view should not and could not be reconciled; only a clear-cut and complete victory for the Concerned Citizens would be acceptable to these people who believed so passionately and so sincerely that evil was being worked by the School Board and school officials.

The textbook controversy quickly polarized the community; but most people never really considered this conflict to be about censorship. To the Concerned Citizens, it was simply an effort to protect their children and the children of the whole community from what they viewed as the unholy, immoral influences of wordly ideas and the dangerously liberal humanists who were in charge of the school system. To most of the substantial group

of people in the community who supported the position of the School Board, the whole affair was viewed as a misguided, irritating, sometimes amusing, but largely harmless raving of a group of ignorant fundamentalists who were intent upon drawing attention to themselves. It was neither; but the mutual misunderstanding of the real issues involved resulted in persistent problems in communication and generated a plethora of simplistic recommendations from people on both sides of the issue.

The leaders of the growing and now well-organized Concerned Citizens never allowed the passion of controversy to wane. Two months after the initial complaint, they began to direct their attention to the school libraries. They demanded that *Grapes of Wrath*, *The Godfather*, and *The Exorcist* be removed immediately. The group insisted that they, as taxpayers and patrons, be allowed to enter the libraries and search for and remove "filth." They would, they said, use as their basic guide a list of authors and of books furnished by a California-based organization. They claimed that books on the list "contain material that is so filthy, so immoral, so politically dangerous, that it is obvious they are unfit school material for anyone." The list of authors included Pearl Buck, Maxwell Anderson, Sherwood Anderson, Charles Beard, John Dewey, W. E. B. Dubois, Oscar Hammerstein, Dorothy Parker, Edgar Snow, John Steinbeck, Louis Untermeyer, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Robert Frost.

This strong assault on the school libraries succeeded in fanning the fires of passion both for and against the cause of the Concerned Citizens. Many people who thought that the *Responding Series* was not worth all the furor it was causing realized the danger of allowing any group to censor and purge a library collection. Even those persons previously unmoved by the controversy began to realize that books which are required reading for school children are one thing; books which are available but not required quite another.

Concurrent with the newly mounted attack on the holdings of the libraries was a renewed effort by the Concerned Citizens to educate the public about the nature of "filth" to be found in the *Responding Series*. A one-page collection of excerpts from the series was compiled and printed by the Concerned Citizens. Ten thousand copies of this page of out-of-context words and phrases were distributed to the citizens of Washington County through local businesses, through many churches, through the mail, and even by hand on the street and at public meetings. The page of "dirty words" frightened and concerned many people who had not previously been involved in the conflict. These "neutrals" began to wonder about School Board members and school officials who supported the use of text books which contained such clearly unacceptable language. Explanations involving the nature of modern and especially ethnic literature, the importance of context, and the assurance that no child was required to read selections offensive to him/her did not appear to be any more convincing to these people than it was to the staunch Concerned Citizens. This new group of citizens who began to question the use of text material containing the

profane and vulgar language as it appeared on the hand bill never really openly aligned themselves with the Concerned Citizens group. But it is very likely that their largely unresolved concerns resulted in a number of the subsequent political changes in the county, changes that proved to be devastating for several years to the public school system as well as to other aspects of county government.

The Concerned Citizens, sensing that they were beginning to develop a considerable amount of public support and consequent political clout, pressed their cause with great fervor and vigor in the late spring and early summer of 1974. They rejected out of hand the Board's offer to reschedule individual students and the Board's assurance that the schools would scrupulously avoid requiring that all students read the selections that contained offensive language. Finally, the still dissatisfied Concerned Citizens asked for and were granted their due-process right of a hearing before the Circuit Court. The presiding judge heard testimony from both sides and ruled that the School Board had not, as the Concerned Citizens had claimed, exceeded its authority nor had it acted improperly in adopting and authorizing the use of this series of text books. Unfortunately, the judge went beyond his legal opinion by saying that he, too, found some of the words and phrases to be offensive and that he had serious reservations about the advisability of such language being included in books written for young people. This parenthetical observation, made with good intention, served only to confuse the issue further.

After their failure to prevail in a decisive way in court, the Concerned Citizens turned their attention to elected officials, especially to members of the Washington County Board of Supervisors and to local representatives in the Virginia General Assembly. The Concerned Citizens made it abundantly clear to these officials that, if they had their way, those officials would be decisively defeated unless the dirty books were removed from the schools, libraries "cleaned up," non-compliant school officials and English teachers fired, and "unresponsive" School Board members replaced.

As outrageous as these demands seemed to most reasonable people, they did, nonetheless, command the attention of the officials to whom they were directed. Elected officials are, we were frequently and forcefully reminded, sworn to represent the will and best interests of their constituencies. That fundamental and legitimate responsibility was interpreted by the Concerned Citizens to mean "do what we want or out you go!" More than one supervisor who opposed or who was in some way perceived to be unresponsive to the Concerned Citizens' group was soundly defeated in the next general election. The 1974-1976 period saw what were, to many of us, surprising and distressing changes in the Board of Supervisors and ultimately in the School Board. Many of these changes were triumphantly proclaimed as unqualified victories by the Concerned Citizens.

The most dramatic of these victories for the Concerned Citizens was the election in 1975 of their dynamic and relentless leader, Bobby Sproles, to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Sproles had run on a simple platform

— he would, he assured the citizens, get rid of the dirty books, and he would see to it that the "unresponsive, irresponsible, and Godless" school officials were fired. Mr. Sproles' election was a shock to the political establishment in the County; it marked the beginning of an era in which Mr. Sproles was, by all accounts, the most influential political force in the county. His eight-year political career was characterized by unprecedented and unrelenting harassment of school officials and by concomitant steadily decreasing financial and moral support for public schools.

Prior to Mr. Sproles' election to the Washington County Board of Supervisors, that board had steadfastly refused to become involved in this dispute, which it properly perceived to be the business of the School Board. After Mr. Sproles was seated on the Board of Supervisors, he was relentless in his efforts to get that body more directly involved in the textbook controversy and in school personnel matters. For more than a year, he made a series of motions to instruct the School Board to discontinue the use of the *Responding Series* and to fire a school official who was currently in disfavor. His motions usually died from lack of a second or were soundly defeated, but his purpose was served by keeping the issues alive. Even after his election to the Washington County Board of Supervisors, Mr. Sproles continued to attend School Board meetings and to provide leadership to the Concerned Citizens.

Another political spin-off of the textbook controversy was that the people of Washington County voted in a public referendum to adopt a change in the method of appointing School Board members. Under the new system, School Board members were appointed by the Board of Supervisors. The Concerned Citizens worked energetically toward this end so that, they assured the voters, School Board members would be more directly accountable to the people. The citizens were persuaded; but it is doubtful that the issue of the method of appointment of School Board members would have surfaced when it did without the stimulus of the textbook controversy. With this change in the method of appointment of the School Board and the changes on the Board of Supervisors, it was not surprising that the Concerned Citizens began to influence the subsequent appointments to the School Board.

After the stormy spring of 1974, the originally staunch position of the School Board with regard to the use of the *Responding Series* began to erode. As early as the summer and fall of 1974, the school officials were directed to search for alternative materials which would not be offensive to these citizens and which could be used along with the *Responding Series* and the Oregon Curriculum as the school division's adopted English texts. The search for new materials lasted through the summer and fall of 1974. During this time, and while public hearings were being held on the newly recommended material, the *Responding Series* continued to be used, but within certain carefully defined limitations. The School Board required that some of the more "offensive" selections be deleted from the curriculum,

that the books be used only at school, and that the *Responding Series* be used only for those students whose parents signed a permission form.

In time the English teachers began to wonder whether even this excellent anthology of modern literature, which had seemed to hold so much promise for motivating previously reluctant readers, was worth the trouble being generated by its use. We all began to question whether any particular piece of literature was so good that its use could be justified in the face of the obvious damage its use inflicted upon the schools and the community. We were being worn down. We were not getting the support we needed from the community. We began to wonder just how far we were really willing to go in standing firm on the principle of opposition to this kind of censorship.

In view of the strongly emotional nature of the conflict, it was not really surprising that the Concerned Citizens failed to be appeased by the Board's continuing efforts to accommodate the citizens' concerns without compromising the integrity of the students' right to read and to know. The Concerned Citizens always maintained that the selection of instructional material should be a democratic process; but, when they were faced with the results of a survey conducted in September, 1974, which indicated that only 120 of 1419 families requested that the *Responding Series* not be used, the protestors continued to insist that the books be removed entirely from the schools and burned. To them the issue was non-negotiable; they were committed to saving *all* the children from the evils taught by these books, regardless of the feelings of the parents of the other children involved and in spite of the judgments of the professional community.

Little by little, over a period of three or four years, the *Responding Series* disappeared entirely from the schools in Washington County. The protestors had prevailed. The intensity and single-mindedness of the attack launched by the Concerned Citizens group had literally worn out the opposition. There were no celebrations, not even the expected public book burnings. The censor's victory seemed relatively hollow and anticlimatic even for them.

It happens, however, that a controversy of this kind is never really ended. In Washington County, the results persist and will be crippling to this school system for many years to come. It is clear to most county citizens that some of the subsequent political events and the persistently non-productive political and educational climate in the County had their genesis in this successful censorship effort. Three successive Washington County division superintendents resigned, each before completing a full four-year term of office. All three men were in leadership positions in the Washington County Schools during the textbook controversy; two had served the county for fifteen years each. All three mean were battered personally and professionally by the controversy and by the unfavorable climate it created to the point that each felt that he could no longer be an effective educational leader in this context. I was the second of the three who resigned.

As further evidence of seriously deteriorating public support for education

in Washington County, the local contribution to public school budgets decreased in the period 1974-1984 from an average position among school divisions in Virginia to the next to last position. The average teacher's salary in Washington County decreased in the period 1974-1984 from a slightly above average position among school divisions in Virginia to the next to last position. Other manifestations of the devastating effects of the controversy are not so easy to document but are at least as educationally debilitating as the ones already mentioned — the lowered morale of the teaching staff, the inability to attract top quality replacement teachers, the gradual loss of key instructional persons, the gradual reduction in the number of supervisory positions, and, worst of all, the erosion of public confidence in the schools.

There are lessons to be learned from all this. First, teachers, administrators, and boards should not be so professionally naive that they believe that all censorship efforts will ultimately fail. Even when school officials have done everything that NCTE and other professional organizations recommend, even when school leaders are logical and fair and consistent, even when teachers have goodness and truth on their side, the censors frequently prevail. Censors of school materials prevail whenever they are able to convince a substantial number of citizens that school people cannot be trusted to make the proper decisions with regard to what children and youth should be learning. Successful censorship is a reflection of an all too pervasive attitude of distrust toward the establishment. Most people who feel betrayed by governmental actions cannot deal directly with the Federal government or the State government. The local School Board is another matter.

The intensity of feeling which parents demonstrate when they feel that their children are being led in the wrong direction should never be underestimated or misunderstood. We must remember that these people firmly believe that they act for the protection of their children; they act out of a combination of love, and fear, and ignorance — a volatile mixture, to say the least. While love and concern for the child very likely triggered the initial concern in Washington County, ignorance and fear caused that concern to grow into a dangerous controversy that threatened the effectiveness of the school system by compromising the right to read and the right to learn.

The greatest danger of a controversy of this kind is that there is a point at which everyone concerned begins to believe that the easiest and best thing to do is to capitulate to the demands of the protestors. It is true that the community should have a role in determining what will be taught in the school, and the school division must take every precaution to see that this fundamental right is protected. However, it is essential that school boards and school officials resist any and all efforts to abridge the students' right to read. If the difference between legitimate selection and censorship is not clear to the community, school leaders must make it clear. Is fighting censorship an issue worth staking a career on? I have concluded that it

is. We must not forget that education is the cornerstone of our society. In a free society there is no place for efforts by one citizen to control the reading of another.

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An Encounter with Censorship

Mary Barnes

In 1978, Mary Barnes was President of VATE. In that role and as supervisor of English for the Virginia Beach School System, she has influenced the teaching of English in Virginia for many years. Last year, she retired from her supervisor's position. In this article, she shares with us her struggles with would-be censors and the conclusions that she has drawn from those encounters.

I opened the newspaper, and there I stood on the first page in the upper right hand corner of the *Virginian-Pilot*. Splashed across the six columns to my left was a story entitled "Controversy on Textbooks Spreads in Virginia." Beneath me and my story, obviously because of its secondary status, appeared the headline "Ford Meets Brezhnev on Arms Curb." Ironically, the object that displaced national and international news was the Ginn *Responding* textbook I held in that picture. Thus began the most tormenting stretch of my tenure as English supervisor.

Previous censorship attempts that I had endured had been niggling skirmishes with individuals who objected to rape in *To Kill A Mockingbird* or to any expletive anywhere that was stronger than *alas* or *heck*. Now locally organized groups appeared — church groups, citizen groups — and all wanted one thing: to be the arbiter of reading matter in Virginia Beach Public Schools. I met groups in the board room, groups in the churches. They sought me out in my office to pray for me, broadcast my name from pulpits and on the media, and sent me obscene newspapers, anonymously, of course, about the Jews and the Blacks destroying America. In their minds, I was that godless supervisor who selected obscene books for children to read.

The censors' beliefs had originated on Mount Sinai, or so they said; and, because the texts challenged prevailing attitudes toward minority groups, women, religion, sex, and government, the *Responding* texts seemed to be trying to tell them that this *status quo* had changed. The censors attacked the books as if those books were creators of the change, rather than reflections of it.

I won this first round of the battle because the would-be censors were not highly organized beyond having lists of "foul language" and the pages where each example appeared. Then entered the second wave of censors: a well-organized national fundamentalist group accusing us of indoctrinating students with the anti-God, anti-family, anti-America philosophy of secular humanism. Other equally well-organized special interest groups soon joined the battle. Their attacks were sporadic but intense and severe.

But, of course, I was not the only target, nor Virginia Beach the only school system under attack. And such attacks continue. As recently as

December 30, 1985, the *Virginian-Pilot* carried an article reprinted from the *Washington Post* on beleaguered school districts in Hillsboro, MO; Church Hill, TN; and Mobile County, AL. The fundamentalists there are engaged in what they term a battle for children's minds against a new religion: humanism. According to the article, the literature to be censored included *Romeo and Juliet* for advocating sexual freedom, *The Scarlet Letter* and "The Three Little Pigs" for promoting witchcraft, and something called "Rhymes and Times" for favoring the Equal Rights Amendment because it describes a little boy cooking something while a little girl was reading. In another case described in another *Washington Post* article on October 16, 1984, special interest groups were reported to have required a book company to change "A Perfect Day for Ice Cream" to "A Perfect Day" and to delete a central incident — a trip to an ice cream parlor — because ice cream is junk food. These cases serve as examples of the censors' habit of mangling literature, of taking bits from the context of the total piece, of ignoring the author's purpose and vision. It all sounded very familiar. The earlier attacks on our use of the *Responding* books also twisted the stories and poems that were cited and pulled words and phrases out of their context and used them for shock value.

However, the *Washington Post* articles overlooked another major thrust of the group — to censor teaching techniques and assignments. I had become familiar with that approach. About five years ago, for example, armed with the book *Weep for Your Children,* written by their mentor Dr. Murray Norris, President of Christian Family Renewal and of Valley Christian University, Fresno, California, several fundamentalists marched into the Virginia Beach School Board Office accusing us of teaching what they called a religion, specifically secular humanism. At that time, in Virginia Beach, ninth-grade superior students had created a work called "A Book of Myself," a modification of the old commonplace book. It contained students' favorite poetry and prose, favorite quotable quotes, favorite art, and photography. Students also supplied their original creations in these categories. The fundamentalists charged us with invading the privacy of students. They cited their source, Dr. Norris, as accusing schools of attacking religion "by having students record their thoughts, conversations, and actions concerning religion" and then inviting other students to attack the beliefs (13). He was quoted as charging that teachers pry into family privacy, for example, by assigning the following types of math problems: What fraction of your time do you spend doing things you enjoy? In what way can you increase this fraction? or by special games that teach children how to succeed in business by bribing and cheating (14). And indeed, the list of similar accusations in *Weep for Your Children* does go on for pages.

The Basis for These Attacks

Because of this attack, I examined in some detail what Dr. Norris and his kind have said. They would deny students the right to read any literature with controversial themes, any literature that challenges students to examine

man — his motives and his actions — and to evaluate those motives and actions. The tool of these fundamentalists is misinterpretation and perversion of the truth about schools and teachers. They often cite the tenets of the Humanist *Manifesto II, which they claim to be a doctrine taught to teachers* in college and practiced by many in our nation's classrooms. I wonder how many public school teachers have ever heard of it. In fact, I've never known a teacher who had heard of it until is was mentioned by the censors. Once the attack on my school system began, however, we heard much about that *Manifesto.*

Having heard so much about it, I took a close look at the *Manifesto* and found that it did not resemble what its critics said of it. To demonstrate the perversion of the truth, I extracted some of the major beliefs of the *Manifesto* and paralleled actual statements from that document with their interpretation by Dr. Norris.

1. from *Manifesto II:* Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a tolerant one. We wish to cultivate the development of a responsible attitude toward sexuality, in which humans are not exploited as sexual objects, and in which intimacy, sensitivity, respect, and honesty in interpersonal relations are encouraged.

   Dr. Norris' interpretation: Humanists believe that everyone has a full right to sexual freedom — all perversions are perfectly okay — even normal.

2. from *Manifesto II:* The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized.

   Dr. Norris' interpretation: Humanists bluntly believe in divorce, premarital sex, and adultery as part of their sexual freedom.

3. from *Manifesto II:* It (civil liberties) also includes a recognition of an individual's right to die with dignity, euthanasia, and the right to suicide . . . . We are concerned for the welfare of the aged, the infirm, the disadvantaged, and also for the outcasts — the mentally retarded, abandoned or abused children, the handicapped, prisoners, and addicts — for all who are neglected or ignored by society.

   Dr. Norris' interpretation: In more blunt terms, the humanists believe in the right to murder the helpless children, aged, and sick in mind and body.

4. from *Manifesto II:* We deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds. Thus we look to the development of a system of world law and world order based upon transnational federal government. This would appreciate cultural pluralism and diversity. It would not exclude pride in national origins and accomplishments nor the handling of regional problems on a regional basis.

   Dr. Norris' interpretation: Humanists do not believe in patriotism. They believe in world government.

Defense Against the Attacks

With such censorship groups waiting to entrap them, it behooves school districts to consider some preparations for the onset of a censorship attack, if not today, then next month or next year, for it is surely coming, as it came to us. To protect themselves, every school district should have a policy statement about censorship and a procedure that would-be censors must follow before any attention will be given to their complaint. In Virginia Beach, we firmly hold to one policy: parents may censor books for their children because they may have greater knowledge of their children's emotional and intellectual maturity than do teachers, but no parent may censor for the children of others. Complainants must file their complaints by answering in writing a series of questions about the books they object to. Thus they must read what they attack.

How have we prepared for censorship? First, in Virginia Beach, we have permanent standing committees in the central office and in all the schools to hear the complaints and respond to them. The idea behind this approach is that a system must be ready for any move. In Virginia, any school district can contact Paul Slayton at Mary Washington College and get information necessary for writing censorship policies and procedures. As chair of the VATE and VCEE committees on censorship, Paul has helped teachers and school districts in a variety of censorship situations in Virginia.

Second, the person or persons selected to defend the materials and curriculum of a school district should be thoroughly familiar with all materials and curriculum practices. Specific teaching materials and strategies fit into a larger context of overall program goals and purposes. The spokesperson for the system must be able to articulate a defense in relation to the total curriculum rather than a word, a line, or an activity in one small portion of the program.

Third, before an attack, teachers, supervisors, and instructional specialists should write rationales for books selected for supplementary classroom use. If these are systematically collected, as Connecticut has done, the district will have a prepared defense for the most often attacked books.

But the greatest asset of a school district in fighting censorship is the commitment of its educators to developing students who question, students who refuse to accept true-false/multiple choice versions of the world but, rather, insist on evaluating the expanse between the poles of absolute truth and absolute falsehood, students who can recognize the useless and the obsolete and dare to challenge them. Today's world needs this kind of mind.

I fear all censors, but most of all, I fear the kind of censor that Dr. Norris quotes. With great admiration, he cites a man who, for me, typifies the most terrifying kind of self-appointed censor — Dr. Bruce Lockerbie, who claims to love man so much that he deplores humanism because it ignores the fact that human evil is a fundamental reality: ". . . the exaltation of man, grounded upon nothing more stable than a sincere belief in the essential goodness of human nature, is as lethal as drug addiction" (12).

I read this statement, and I sickened. I have always looked to literature to show me what man is or has become and to involve me emotionally in life so that I can examine my own life. Literature frequently focuses on mankind's innate depravity, but it does not condemn us to this state. It reminds each of us of what we might be. I have also looked to religion to give me the faith that I *can become* better and that I have the heart and the mind to choose rightly. But Lockerbie, a Christian leader, tells me I am too depraved to act for my own "exaltation."

Finally, supervisors must expect that, despite the most thoughtful precautions a school system might design, challenges, when they occur, will be mentally, physically, and emotionally draining. There are no winners in these confrontations. Unfortunately, if and when the confrontations end, the issues are usually unresolved. Both sides will still hold the same positions to be brought back to the next challenge.

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Self-Censorship: A Conservative View

James D. Black

An English teacher in Louisa County, Virginia, James Black speaks both as an experienced teacher and as a conservative. He gives us his views on the responsibility of a teacher to select with care the literature students will read.

We English teachers do teach morality. That's inescapable, given that literature deals with people and conflicts and beliefs. The basic questions to consider concern what values are to be taught and how consciously we go about teaching them. My own answers come from the Conservative tradition and its assumptions about the nature of Man.

Man is a creature of mixed characteristics, leaning more toward evil than good (recall Swift). Properly educated, and in a structured environment, Man's undesirable tendencies will be checked so that whatever good traits he possesses may emerge; there is nothing, however, to guarantee an absolute perfection, not even God's grace coupled with Man's own aspirations for good.

Man does not have an innate capacity for self-government (witness *Lord of the Flies*). Rather, this is a conditional capacity: Man governs himself only with the help of the best that his social institutions and traditions can offer. Although he relies on order and authority, he wants, not Fascism, but a just and equitable state governed by strongly religious ethics.

Man must not believe in the infallibility of his own rationality. He knows that the inherited wisdom of his culture is invaluable; he will ignore it only at the peril of casting individual rationality against the accumulated experience and wisdom of untold generations, and only if he dares become a cultural orphan, an alien in the very community he rejects.

Man must cultivate virtues, among them justice, wisdom, piety, industry, order, honesty, and an admiration for the best in thought and deed. Education enters here, for education (by family, church, and school) is the force which shapes virtue, and it is only through virtue that Man reaches freedom. The school's role must be a conserving one, teaching a child the inherited wisdom of his culture, training him toward order and self-discipline, and instilling in him a traditional sense of morality. In our own era, when other educational agents are weakening, this conserving chore may fall even more heavily upon the schools; and it may take a peculiarly literary bent, for good literature is the depository of those values our culture prizes the most.

Given these assumptions, English teachers have to make crucial choices about what to include in a finite curriculum. Our choices cannot be casually made, the "Oh, I taught that last year — time for something different"

syndrome. We cannot always teach the merely entertaining; sometimes we must deliberately chose the lasting over the faddish — John Milton over Yoko Ono. At times we have to consider how best to maintain the fabric of the social order — choosing "Prometheus Bound" rather than "Prometheus Unbound." Fallible though we may be, we must try to see that what is tolerable as an underground or sub-culture literature may be harmful and unacceptable if it is allowed to become the norm. We cannot willy-nilly or deliberately teach the values of a counter-culture and blithely assume that traditional values will somehow survive and override their contraries.

Likewise we have to be careful about *how* we teach. We can point out the dangers of Thoreau at the same time we recognize the adolescent appeal of his individualistic philosophy. We can teach Orwell's desire for a stable and meaningful language even as we show proper concern about Big Brother. And there is a place for teaching an alternative to the glorified view of the American teenager — Tom Sawyer deserved some of the punishment he received, and perhaps a little more.

In short, we English teachers should practice considerable self-censorship — a word which may strike many as fairly negative. However, I see this philosophy as strongly positive, directed toward a wholesome and strengthening end. If our thinking is not clotted with ideas of radical social reform, of tearing down traditional parental, societal, and religious models, we will wisely choose what and how to teach.

Censorship as an Ethical Issue

Robert C. Hanna

As is probably clear to all of us, the issue of selection or censorship contains complex philosophical dimensions. Robert Hanna, a secondary school English teacher at St. Margaret's School in Tappahannock, Virginia, helps us to understand those philosophical issues by making a key distinction.

The concept of censorship tends to be thought of pejoratively by many educators. The mere mention of the word can easily elicit defensive responses among professionals who are otherwise predisposed to hold calm, rational discussions on a plethora of issues. In an effort to remove some of the bias from the concept, this paper will attempt to explore censorship as an ethical issue before briefly reviewing professional literature in terms of reasonable educational perspectives one might expect to find on the issue.

Americans, by and large, value education. A simple consideration of the compulsory education laws of each state, the national debate over the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform," and the public outcry against federal reductions in student aid strongly suggests the extent to which education is valued. However, the term "education" connotes "teaching," and "teaching" connotes "materials," and, practically instantaneously, Americans have an educational topic on which they do not agree.

It seems reasonable to say that most teaching cannot take place without some materials of instruction and that the teaching of English literature in particular cannot take place without the specific learning material of instruction called a book. Immediately, an ethical issue arises. Given that books belong in the English classroom and in the school library, who decides which books will be taught to which students at which ages? As soon as one acknowledges that it is impossible for all works of literature to be taught during high school (not to mention during a lifetime), the issue of censorship must be faced, for, regardless of the reasons, some works of literature will not be taught and some will not even be available to students. Censorship is an ethical issue in a most basic sense, inasmuch as both materials taught and materials omitted may have an effect on an adolescent's moral as well as cognitive development.

At this point, one might fairly ask if censorship, albeit an ethical issue, is a significant issue. Focusing solely on high school English literature teachers, one might suppose that, as competently trained subject matter specialists, these teachers generally teach the same literature to all students, after making an allowance for reading and other cognitive abilities. As rational as this presumption may seem, it by no means reflects a universal

situation in schools. Administrators, parents, and organizations of a religious, ethnic, or political affiliation, to name a few, are frequently instrumental in determining what literature adolescents will read and what literature they will have access to in the school library. Although these individuals and organizations may not be subject matter specialists, they play a significant role in the moral development of the nation's children. Regardless of whether or not there are universal ethical norms in the Western tradition, norms which each generation proves to itself are true, once Plato's *Republic* is removed from the classroom for homosexual considerations, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is removed for heterosexual considerations, and Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* is removed for racial considerations, there may be no equivalent substitute works of literature to teach. In light of such possible and profound ramifications, censorship clearly is a significant ethical issue.

Even before reviewing any professional literature on high school censorship, it should be possible to determine which types of perspectives on the issue will most likely be found. Since Americans value education and since education includes the use of books, it would be most unusual to find an advocate for total censorship. Such an advocate, whether consciously or not, would be against education, since no books would be allowed in classrooms or libraries. On the other hand, one would not expect to find an educator calling for absolutely no censorship in the high school. Teachers, as professionals, must make judgments as to the level of maturity specific classes or individual adolescents have reached and then determine which works of literature will be of most value, from all educational perspectives, not just that of moral development. If, therefore, a review of literature does reveal numerous educators who state that some censorship is necessary, the focus of the censorship issue should probably concern exactly who should make the censorship decisions.

A committee of the National Council of Teachers of English (1978) stresses the role of both the teacher and the librarian in selecting and rejecting books for schools. In the classroom, teachers should be prepared for challenges to decisions by always presenting "a balanced rather than a one-sided point of view" (p. 235). Numerous suggestions are made for keeping parents informed about what is being taught, through the use of conferences, general meetings, and mailed messages. While acknowledging that complaints about text selections will still sometimes occur and should be considered carefully, the NCTE's approach is basically offensive, that is, to prevent differences of opinion on censorship by keeping parents fully informed about books and lessons.

Jenkinson (1979) believes that censorship decisions should be made jointly, not just by teachers and librarians, but also by administrators. Recognizing that such an approach will leave a school open to attempts at further censorship from outsiders seeking to influence the administrators, he urges schools to adopt formally and make public both a materials selection policy and a set of procedures for handling complaints. He disapproves of situations

in which "one person or one group — no matter how small — can exert sufficient pressure on some school officials to have books removed from school libraries or classrooms despite the wishes of a majority" (p. 159).

Palmer (1982) seems generally to concur with Jenkinson, but he suggests an additional defensive approach as well as an offensive approach to censorship. First, he states, when a specific work of literature is objected to, reading teachers should already be prepared to inform "parents and other community members. . . about significant research findings concerning adolescents and their responses to different kinds of literature" (p. 311), findings which suggest no direct relationship between content read and personal attitudes and behaviors. Second, teachers should actively promote community support for the freedom for students to read many social, political, and religious perspectives, not for the freedom to read everything. Such support can be encouraged by lecturing, writing newspaper editorials, and teaching adult evening courses.

Glatthorn (1979) believes that the community should assist as censors on a limited basis. He maintains that English teachers are not subject matter specialists in the field of contemporary literature. Since "we don't know which books might be too disturbing for that troubled adolescent" (p. 50), he advises an open dialogue between schools and local community individuals and organizations. However, to be on the safe side, he recommends teaching classic literature, that is, literature which has been traditionally taught and has been traditionally deemed to have merit.

Foley (1983) expands on Glatthorn's approach and states that "the community has a legitimate role in selection of library books and instructional materials" (p. 51). Although Foley does not specify who within a school should make the primary book selection decisions, a public statement should "delegate authority for selection to designated staff members, specify the objectives of the instructional unit . . . and specify procedures for challenging specific titles" (p. 52). These procedures should include the establishment of a reconsideration committee which, after holding hearings, decides the fate of any book in question. Foley does not indicate if any community members should serve on this committee.

Naylor (1978) sharply retreats from Foley's position. Although he concurs that "all citizens have the right to question, scrutinize, and challenge what goes on in the public schools" (p. 122), he stresses the role of the teacher in making censorship decisions and the importance of that role being respected by other adults. "Teachers possess important and unique qualifications for making judgments about what is be taught in our schools. . ." (p. 122). He emphasizes that teachers interact with students as they are, not as parents or others want the students to be. Accordingly, the teacher is entitled to exert "significant influence" in many educational decisions, including making book selections and omissions.

Not surprisingly, no educators were located who suggested that someone outside of the school community should have the primary responsibility for determining which books should be taught and which should not be

made available to all. To do so would, to some degree, lessen the professionalism of the teaching or administrating profession. Accordingly, the issue of high school censorship in professional literature generally focuses on which particular school organization members should make censorship decisions and to what extent anyone else should participate in the process, not on what specific materials should be censored, or even whether censorship is justified. Censorship, then, may reasonably be considered as an ethical issue concerning *by whom* rather than *to what extent*.

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Restriction on Novel Could Be Positive

Brian O'Neill

Brian O'Neill, a reporter in the news department of the Roanoke Times and World News, *has a regularly featured column. When the Patrick County Public Schools decided to require parental permission for access to Judy Blume's* Forever *in response to one anonymous parent's complaint that the book was available at all, O'Neill used his column to reflect upon the outcomes of the decision.*

I just finished reading *Forever,* by Judy Blume, a novel that is on the restricted shelf in the Patrick County High School library.

I never would have read the thing if I hadn't heard that it was attacked. Whenever I hear that a book should be banned or taken out of regular circulation, I try to read it.

It's a good policy. Books that get people angry are almost always great books.

The Catcher in the Rye, by J.D. Salinger; *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain; *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, by Ken Kesey; *The Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck; *God Bless You Mr. Rosewater*, by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. — all these novels have gotten into trouble in one place or another.

No Sugar-coating on Truth

They get into trouble because the authors have tried so bravely to get at the truth. Things aren't sugar-coated. The novel's heroes, usually non-conformists, struggle with big questions.

This makes the people who think they have all the answers very nervous. They go to the libraries to try to keep the new answers out of people's hands. They often succeed.

Teen-agers then are left with the puniest of books to read for pleasure. So they do what anybody would do. They turn on the TV. And the nation gets a little more stupid, daily.

But let me back up. It's taking me forever to get to *Forever.* It should get more respect, because it is a good book.

I can understand why it is not in general circulation. It uses an expression in the very first sentence that I couldn't repeat in this newspaper. And it deals with a high school romance that leads to a couple doing something that many people would like to see reserved for marriage. I'm not talking about choosing china patterns.

Blume is a good writer, and she captures a high school romance very well. Her characters seem like real kids with real problems and real feelings.

This article originally appeared in the January 20, 1986, edition of the Roanoke Times & World News, *p. A3.*

The peer pressure is in there. The nervousness is in there. The language is in there. The book deals with life as it exists.

Value in *Forever* Recognized

The Patrick County School Board, which received only one complaint about the book, did not ban it. Evidently, it saw that there was value in the book's honest depiction of a teenager's life. Its decision last week to let parents decide if their children may read *Forever* is not only reasonable, it might give teenagers the news of a lifetime: Books are exciting and important.

It could get teenage boys to read a book written from a girl's point of view, maybe for the first time in their lives. (The sappy cover on the paperback edition of *Forever* — a girl's face in an open locket — has to have been keeping them away for years.)

It could get some parents to read *Forever* and find out, or just remember, what teenage life can be like. They might also remember that a little book won't change their kids overnight. They might take this chance to explain again their values to their children, and might be relieved to learn their children still agree with them.

A rare and wonderful thing might take place: education.

Don't Let Your Curriculum Be Hatch-eted

Paul C. Slayton, Jr.

The issue of censorship and selection is clearly a national one. And Virginia certainly has had its share of problems. Paul Slayton, Professor of Education at Mary Washington College, has spoken out against censorship as chair of the VATE and the VCEE committees on censorship and as a member of NCTE's Standing Committee Against Censorship. Here he discusses one of the newest censorship problems, interpretations of the Hatch Amendment.

Gone are the days when attempts to censor were directed at a particular book or material used in the school curriculum or shelved in the school library. Gone, too, is the era when the would-be censor was only an individual citizen with deep-felt injured sensibilities, clothed in the righteous rage of the innocent-offended, ready and willing to take on the world to avenge a personal outrage. Today's censor is more likely to arrive with an entourage, each member waving in one hand the banner of a national organization, such as Phyllis Schlafly's *Eagle Forum* or Beverly LeHaye's *Concerned Women of America* or Jerry Falwell's *Moral Majority*. In the other hand, the protestors are sure to be brandishing for all to see a copy of the U.S. Office of Education's "Hatch Amendment regs."

Just such an outraged entourage, calling itself "Parents for Academics," recently descended upon the Arlington, Virginia, County Schools, demanding that the school secure written permission from each parent before any classroom discussion of topics such as sex, drugs or nuclear warfare. The "authority" they quoted to substantiate their demands was the regulations issued by the United States Department of Education on September 6, 1984, implementing the "Hatch Amendment" to the General Education Provisions Act of 1978. In actuality, the document they presented to the Arlington County School Board was an interpretation of the Hatch Amendment regulations prepared by the Maryland Coalition of Concerned Parents on Privacy Rights in Public School, a document which is being distributed nationally by Phyllis Schlafly and her Eagle Forum. Copies of this document, reprinted at the end of this article, have now appeared, with blanks filled in, in many school divisions throughout Virginia and the nation.

Upon close reading, this document appears to indicate that Virginia's school boards, indeed, school boards throughout the nation, have been reduced by the Hatch Amendment to the status of mere administrators for a Federally decreed or at least Federally delimited curriculum. It would seem that any transgression by local schools against these broad-ranging prohibitions would bring down the wrath and the Damoclean budget-axe

of the Federal government upon any offending school. Such an interpretation of the Hatch Amendment and its implementing regulations is, however, a gross and unconscionable falsification of the truth, designed and promulgated by the New Right to bully and brow-beat local schools into compliance with the objectives of the Radicals, not those of the Federal Government.

What Is the Hatch Amendment?

In 1978 when the United States Congress approved the General Education Provision Act, section 439 of the Act was amended, upon the motion of Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), to include two paragraphs relating to the protection of pupil rights.

Article 439 (a) of Senator Hatch's amendment stipulated that parents must be given the opportunity to review all instructional material, including teachers' manuals, films, tapes, and other supplementary instructional materials which are to be used in any *research or experimental teaching techniques in programs,* projects, or activities which are *funded by the U.S. Department of Education.*

Article 439 (b) provides that no student shall be required to submit without prior written consent of parents to *psychiatric* or *psychological* examination, testing, or treatment in which the *primary purpose* is to reveal information concerning one or more of the following: (1) political affiliations; (2) mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student or his or her family; (3) sex behavior and attitudes; (4) illegal, anti-social self-incriminating and demeaning behavior; (5) critical appraisal of other individuals with whom the student has close family relationships; (6) legally recognized privileged and analogous relationships (such as those of lawyers, physicians, or ministers); or (7) income, other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under a program.

Thus, it is abundantly clear in the language of the Hatch Amendment that its prohibitions are applicable only to those programs which are experimental in nature and are designed to test new and untried teaching and learning procedures *which are funded by the Federal government.*

The Hatch Amendment Regulations

Regulations to implement the provisions of the Hatch Amendment have been prepared by the U.S. Department of Education. While those regulations are rather ambiguous in defining some of the provisions of the amendment, particularly such things as "psychological testing," the drafted regulations clearly spell out that the provisions of the Hatch Amendment are applicable only to programs administered by the Secretary of Education. Nevertheless, the nationally organized Far Right pressure groups have seized upon the Hatch Amendment as a platform from which to launch local assaults on a wide range of traditional classroom activities including open-ended discussions, creative problem solving, student autobiographies and journals,

and such courses as sex and drug education and organic evolution.

To serve their own ends, the Right Wing pressure groups have erroneously interpreted the Hatch Amendment and its implementing regulations to apply to any school receiving Federal funding, even to support a school lunch program. These groups persist in promulgating this information despite the fact that the Hatch Amendment and its implementing regulations unequivocally state that they apply only to programs directly funded by the Federal Government.

In addition to the previously cited attack upon state and locally funded programs in Arlington County Schools, the Hatch Amendment has been used by organized pressure groups in Hillsboro, Missouri, seeking to prohibit the schools in that community from using the Disney film, *Never Cry Wolf*, and Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*; from holding mock elections; and from teaching the state-mandated and funded sex education course in the elementary schools. In Cobb County, Georgia, threats by a pressure group to invoke the Hatch Amendment resulted in the superintendent of schools circulating a memo to teachers restricting classroom discussion in seven areas: evolution, abortion, communism, religion, witchcraft, personal inquiries, and valuing. Other local school programs have been "Hatcheted" in communities in West Palm Beach, Florida; Lincoln County, Oregon; West Alexander, Pennsylvania; Gallipolis, Ohio; and Boonville, Illinois. Thus the Hatch Amendment is having a chilling effect upon education programs in schools throughout the country without regard to the funding source of the programs.

This chilling effect has come about because all too many people, including school administrators and teachers, are unaware of the purpose of the Hatch Amendment and the limited range of its applicability. The lack of knowledge by educators leaves them open to intimidation by the pseudo-knowledgeability and threats of organized pressure groups brandishing printed material which erroneously interprets the Hatch Amendment to the ends sought by the Far Right power structure. And the ultimate end these Right Wing organizations have in mind is no secret; it was directly expressed by the Reverend Jerry Falwell: "I hope to live to see the day when, as in the early days of our country, we won't have any public schools."

The misrepresentations of the Far Right groups have been so blatant that Senator Hatch, himself, felt it was necessary to insert a denial of the false interpretations of his amendment into the congressional record:

> . . . some parent groups have interpreted both the statute and the regulations so broadly that they would have them apply to all curriculum materials, library books, teacher's guides, et cetera, paid for with State or local money. They would have all tests used by teachers in such non-federally funded courses as physical education, health, sociology, literature, et cetera, reviewed by parents before they could be administered to students. Because there are no Federal funds in such courses, the Hatch Amendment is not applicable to them.

It is abundantly clear that the Radical Right has launched a major offensive to undermine local control of school curriculum, the local autonomy which

is the very hallmark and the strength of public education in America. The weapon they have seized upon to affect their nefarious objectives is a maliciously fallacious interpretation of the Hatch Amendment and its implementing regulations. To foil these subversive machinations of the Far Right, it is absolutely essential that educators become intimately knowledgeable about the Hatch Amendment and its applicability. Three publications which are most helpful in developing a knowledge base from which to defend local curriculum decision-making are these:

1. "Hatch Amendment Regulations," Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202 (free).
2. *The Hatch Amendment Regulations: A Guideline Document.* Office of Governmental Regulations, American Association of School Administrators, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, VA 22209 (free).
3. *Child Abuse in the Classroom,* Phyllis Schlafly, Eagle Forum, Alton, IL 62002 ($4.95).

Readily available, however, is general information about the curriculum decision-making process in Virginia, the first essential in being prepared to defend local school decisions against the demagogue. The knowledgeable educator should know that the Constitution of Virginia is the authority for establishing public schools in the State. That document delegates to the Virginia State Board of Education and to the boards of local school divisions the authority to establish the curriculum of the public schools in the State and to authorize the use of specific text books and teaching materials.

The Virginia State Board of Education routinely makes all curriculum materials offered by publishers and suppliers for adoption in Virginia schools available for inspection by citizens. The opportunity is readily available for any citizen to participate in the textbook adoption process by preparing and submitting personal evaluations of any and all submitted materials.

Local school boards, too, make the state-adopted curriculum materials available for inspection and comment by citizens before decisions are made as to which of the materials on the state-adopted list are to be selected for use in the local schools. Moreover, Virginia State Department of Education regulations, which have the effect of law, have long required parental permission before children are subjected to any psychological or psychiatric testing.

Democracy is alive and well in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as it is in other states. The process of developing and implementing curriculum and selecting curriculum materials in Virginia schools is open to input by all citizens. Individuals may make their voices heard as decisions about public schools are made at both the state and local level. More citizens should avail themselves of the ample opportunities to participate in the process. If more citizens participated actively in the decision-making process,

there would be less to fear when those well-prepared, highly vocal and self-anointed demagogues appear on the scene, representing themselves as the prophets of the will of the people.

The only danger to public education is the omnipresent danger in a democracy that the people will not have the information they need to defend themselves against the loud and willful few who twist the truth to their own ends. Educators must become informed and, in turn, make the facts known to all citizens. Then, as Thomas Jefferson assured us, an informed and educated citizenry will make the right decisions.

English teachers must assuredly be knowledgeable about the legal basis of the English curriculum in their schools and the legal basis of the text book and other materials which support it. Literature, which opens the door to five thousand years of human experience, is under frequent assault from those dogmatists who would deny that human experience. Consequently, English teachers must realize that they are not alone and unprotected from radicals who go "bump in the night." They must understand that their curriculum and the textbooks which support it are chosen democratically and that the full force of local and state institutions is behind those decisions. If and when the attack upon their local school curriculum comes, they should expect — and demand — that they receive the backing of those state and local officials exercising the authority conferred by the processes of democracy.

The following letter is reprinted from The Phyllis Schlafly Report, *January 1985.*

To: School Board President

Dear_____:

I am the parent of_____ who attends _____ School. Under U. S. Legislation and court decisions, parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education, and pupils have certain rights which the schools may not deny. Parents have the right to assure that their children's beliefs and moral values are not undermined by the schools. Pupils have the right to have and to hold their values and moral standards without direct or indirect manipulation by the schools through curricula, textbooks, audio-visual materials, or supplementary assignments.

Accordingly, I hereby request that my child be involved in NO school activities or materials listed below unless I have first reviewed all relevant materials and have given my written consent for their use:

— Psychological and psychiatric examinations, tests, or surveys that are designed to elicit information about attitudes, habits, traits, opinions, beliefs or feelings of an individual or group;

— Psychological and psychiatric treatment that is designed to affect behavioral, emotional, or attitudinal characteristics of an individual or group;

— Values clarification, use of moral dilemmas, discussion of religious

or moral standards, role-playing or open-ended discussions of situations involving moral issues, and survival games including life/death decision exercises;

— Death education, including abortion, euthanasia, suicide, use of violence, and discussions of death and dying;

— Curricula pertaining to alcohol and drugs;

— Instruction in nuclear war, nuclear policy, and nuclear classroom games;

— Anti-nationalistic, one-world government or globalism curricula;

— Discussion and testing on inter-personal relationships; discussions of attitudes toward parents and parenting;

— Education in human sexuality, including premarital sex, extra-marital sex, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, group sex and marriages, prostitution, incest, masturbation, bestiality, divorce, population control, and roles of males and females; sex behavior and attitudes of student and family;

— Pornography and any materials containing profanity and/or sexual explicitness;

— Guided fantasy techniques, hypnotic techniques; imagery and suggestology;

— Organic evolution, including the idea that man has developed from previous or lower types of living things;

— Discussions of witchcraft and the occult, the supernatural, and Eastern mysticism;

— Political affiliations and beliefs of student and family; personal religious beliefs and practices;

— Mental and psychological problems and self-incriminating behavior potentially embarrassing to the student or family;

— Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom the child has family relationships;

— Legally recognized privileged and analagous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;

— Income, including the student's role in family activities and finances;

— Non-academic personality tests; questionnaires on personal and family life and attitudes;

— Autobiography assignments; log books, diaries, and personal journals;

— Contrived incidents for self-revelation; sensitivity training, group encounter sessions, talk-ins, magic circle techniques, self-evaluation and auto-criticism; strategies designed for self-disclosure (e.g., zig-zag);

— Sociograms; sociodrama; blindfold walks; isolation techniques.

The purpose of this letter is to preserve my child's rights under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (the Hatch Amendment) to the General Education Provisions Act, and under its regulations as published in the *Federal Register* of Sept. 6, 1984, which became effective Nov. 12, 1984. These regulations provide a procedure for filing complaints first at the local level, and then with the U.S. Department of Education. If a

voluntary remedy fails, federal funds can be withdrawn from those in violation of the law. I respectfully ask you to send me a substantive response to this letter attaching a copy of your policy statement on procedure for parental permission requirements, to notify all my child's teachers, and to keep a copy of this letter in my child's permanent file. Thank you for your cooperation.

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Winter 1987 issue of the *Virginia English Bulletin* will have as its focus

Creative Writing: The Link Between Literature and Composition Study

Although all writing involves writers in a creative act, creative writing is categorized by Britton as "poetic" and Kinneavy as "literary," where the emphasis is on literary form. Having students engage in creative writing is not a frill although it is something most students enjoy. It is, however, more than assigning students to write a poem or a short story. Articles for this issue might address: What strategies help students write a poem, a short story, or a play? How is creative writing linked to literature study? What are the skills learned through creative writing that apply to other forms of writing (transactional)? How do we evaluate creative writing? Creative writing — how much? for whom? in what ways? How is creative thinking linked to creative writing? Articles might explore theoretical issues and/or describe practical approaches.

Deadline for submission of manuscripts is September 15, 1987.

Censorship and the Aims of Education: Some Unanswered Questions

Onalee McGraw

Onalee McGraw is a Member of the National Council on Educational Research and was formerly a policy analyst with the Heritage Foundation. She explores here the treatment of values and especially religious values in public schools.

The debate on censorship in public education seldom goes much beyond the usual socio-political narrative of the contending parties to the disputes and the books in question. People for the American Way, the organization which promulgates the values of TV entrepreneur Norman Lear, consistently presents the following picture: censorship is on the rise as the dark forces of the "religious right" seek to take away the First Amendment freedoms of students and their teachers. Members of the education community frequently take the "experiential" approach; that is, censorship is a priority issue depending on whether one has experienced first hand any "censorship attempts" from parents in the community.

However, debate on this question might be advanced significantly if we look beneath the surface at some of the questions that rarely get asked. What the media refers to as "censorship incidents" are simply reflections of the conflicting religious, philosophical, and cultural values held in varying degrees of intensity by Americans who support the public schools with their taxes.

Educational Purpose: From Consensus to Fragmentation

The rationale for the American public school system rests on the premises that (1) there is an American neighborhood-based common culture and (2) the values and beliefs underlying that culture represent a consensus among all the various religious and ethnic groups comprising American society. These two assumptions may have been true to a greater degree in the past, as exemplified by *Little House on the Prairie* or *Good Morning, Miss Dove,* than they are today. However, the assumptions regarding unity of educational purposes and philosophy were never really founded on pluralistic realities but on political power. For example, both Catholics and Jews in the previous decades of the late Nineteenth and earlier part of the Twentieth Centuries would hardly have thought that the Protestant ethic that generally served as the foundation of schooling in these years was something they had been consulted about. Consequently, since Catholics have as part of their religious and cultural tradition the notion of education

as formation as well as technical training, they established in that earlier period their own schools at all levels.

Regarding the race question, we all know that our common public schools reflected the prejudice toward and segregation of black Americans in our culture in the years before the landmark civil rights developments. In the 1960's, even as the public school system opened up under changes in the law to reflect a more tolerant attitude toward all persons regardless of racial and ethnic background, the system was beginning to lose whatever moral and philosophical consensus that might have once existed on the aims and purposes of education.

Another article entirely could be written simply to chronicle the ways in which that consensus fell apart, but an example or two is suggestive. In 1962 the Supreme Court declared that specific acknowledgement of God as the Supreme Being of the universe expressed in prayer was unconstitutional by virtue of the court's definition of separation of church and state.

Those who closely study the American judicial traditions know that, in this case, as in a number of others, the court was following the tradition of logical positivism rather than the English common law tradition upon which our American government is based. The conflict precipitated by those two diverse strains of legal thought not only has influenced greatly the development of our constitutional law but also has affected our entire culture.

Moreover, those who have been fortunate in acquiring a broad liberal arts education know that categories such as religion, history, literature, philosophy, psychology, and sociology are not isolated, self-contained boxes of knowledge but, rather, are interwoven dimensions of the reality of human existence. They also know that the same tension between the Judeo-Christian-classical tradition and the intellectual legacy of the Eighteenth Century Enlightenment pervades the humanities, especially literature.

The argument in the 1962 prayer case may have turned on separation of church and state, but the effect of the decision was to accelerate the secularization of the public classroom and heavily to tip the balance there in favor of the intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment. Separation of church and state operationally now means the *de facto* absence in the classroom of God-centered literary works except as interesting "artifacts" of earlier historical periods. The living dimension of religion as it relates to human culture is thus largely relegated to the dustbin of human history.

A recent study sponsored by the National Institute of Education confirmed this fact. New York University psychology professor Paul C. Vitz conducted a study of texts in social studies, reading, and history widely used in both elementary and secondary grades. His empirical content analysis of these widely used textbooks revealed that religion as an element in American life was virtually ignored. Vitz noted that not only are specific references to religious life omitted, so also are references to the existence of the traditional values that flow from religion. As an example, Vitz examined several world history textbooks for the sixth grade and found that the

life of the Moslem founder, Mohammed, gets "much more coverage" than the life of the founder of Christianity, Jesus. Another example was a textbook that discussed Joan of Arc yet made no reference at all to God, religion, or her being named a saint. An excellent recent book on this same issue is *The Naked Public Square* by the prominent Lutheran theologian, Richard John Neuhaus.

In short, the issue of what American children should be learning in the public schools is an extremely serious question. There is much discussion today among those who wish to reform American public education about restoration of a common core curriculum. Yet it has been demonstrated that America does not have a unified common culture. Many people would argue that what is now absent from the public school classroom for whatever reason is precisely the element of education which is most essential in the formation of the character and the intellect of the human person. It is extremely difficult, for example, to see how one can discuss the existence of virtue and vice without reference to the Supreme Being.

Fragmentation and Censorship

The reader may be asking what all this discussion of consensus and fragmentation in a common culture has to do with the censorship issue. Parental complaints began in earnest on such educational programs as sex education, values clarification, survival games, behavior modification, and assignments in drug-store fiction as the moral consensus came unglued in the late 1960's.

Younger educators may wish to ask the "old-timers" about the big controversy in the mid-seventies over the social studies course *Man: A Course of Study* (MACOS). This multi-million dollar, federally funded social studies curriculum began as the conception of the famous psychologist Jerome Bruner, whose work greatly influenced education leaders and policy makers in the 1960's and 1970's. This social studies course clearly implied that human persons are merely complex animals, post-tested students on the degree to which they agreed with the cultural relativistic premises of the course developers, and was the proud showpiece of the "new social studies" that was going to "revolutionize" American education. A storm of protest, lasting several years and ultimately resulting in several Congressional hearings, broke out over this course. Parents were outraged that the course developers claimed the right to educate their fifth and sixth graders in a course they claimed was "scientifically" developed to teach the young "what makes man more human." That very bitter public argument took place some eight years before Norman Lear ever started People for the American Way, and any educator today who wants to research the censorship question can do no better than to go back and get both sides of the MACOS issue.

In those days many educators who themselves might have private reservations about MACOS, nevertheless, failed publicly to articulate why parents might be right that such a course is inappropriate in the American

tax-supported school system. Clearly, the course's philosophical assumptions were squarely in the tradition of the Enlightenment thinkers together with Charles Darwin and their modern disciplines; and yet the course was highly objectionable to many people in and out of the system. It not only failed to reflect whatever common culture we do have but also proclaimed that the most important thing to learn about culture itself is tolerance for all cultures and social norms.

Now, ten years later, leading educational reformers echo the very arguments parents made in those years. Now prominent educators such as Ernest Boyer, John Goodlad, and Theodore Sizer are saying the system needs to be reformed and that we must restore a common core curriculum. Many parents wonder about the silence of many leading educators during this early period. In his recent autobiography, *In Search of Mind,* Jerome Bruner describes the whole MACOS controversy as an attack by extremists on academic freedom.

There is a reason why more educators did not speak up. The public school system is supposed to be appropriate for every family and accommodate all values and beliefs. Certainly every family is expected to support the system with a required measure of its earnings. Yet "censorship battles," in whatever time or place they occur, betray the myth of a unified common culture. The human response is to move to protect the system rather than explore the nature of the problem.

For the large numbers of parents who have strong convictions about what they believe and what their children should be learning, this stand is not good enough. Significant numbers of parents who have intense feelings about these questions have already acted by placing their children in private schooling that reflect their values rather than someone else's. It must be said that this is by no means a negative response to the system in a large number of cases. As an example, many minority based private schools are springing up that affirm the cultural, ethic and racial identity of minorities in the educational setting. Recently the membership of a prominent Jewish organization voted to endorse the Jewish day school as a viable alternative to public schooling. In both of these examples, the establishment of separate schools is a reflection of the great importance of education as formation of the human person rather than mere technical training in "skills" to become a productive member of society (the child is the collective democracy as John Dewey saw it).

What is really going on here? Is the censorship controversy a battle to the death with religiously motivated "Darth Vaders" bent on imposing their values on others? Perhaps some questions have been raised that will help us move beyond the level of merely talking about how to establish procedures to process complaints for the smooth running of the system.

The censorship issue is a social issue since it involves human values and how human beings define themselves and others. The public school system presumes a common and fairly united culture, but today our society is so fragmented it cannot agree upon the definition of a human person or

when such a person becomes a being to whom rights are attached.

How can educators who by profession are attached to public education begin to sort all of this out and fairly assess the diverse voices speaking in the American public square on these issues today? First of all, we *all* need to remember that where we stand is where we sit and at least the myth that education can be value free has been put to rest in this reform era. What is especially needed is not just more debate, but more reading and reflection on ideas from traditions that are different from our own.

Engaging in Genuine Debate in the Marketplace of Ideas

Secretary of Education William Bennett, who takes a generally philosophical approach to education issues, has stated many times the importance of *deepening* the debate on education issues. One of the highest priorities in the education reform movement that even the education union leaders do not sniff at is the restoration of excellence by insuring that all prospective public school teachers come into teaching with a strong liberal arts background.

Too often individuals who plan to become teachers have been forced to endure large doses of educational psychology and other courses where all they learn is that man is either merely "neutrons and protons" or a bundle of feelings attached to a body in need of self-awareness and self-actualization. Teachers need to learn more about the history of ideas. It is essential to have a strong background in the humanities with a special emphasis on the *entire* history of thought. In order to be complete, education in this area must include the Hebraic, Greek, Roman, and Christian thinkers (Catholic and Protestant) as well as the Enlightenment theorists and the American pragmatists. Why be content with only a smattering of Compte, Freud, Jung, William James, and John Dewey? Try Isaias, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Hooker, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. If you have only been exposed to Rousseau and Locke as representatives of the Enlightenment, try Edmund Burke. If you like the Victorians, read not only Dickens and Thackeray but John Henry Newman (*The Idea of the University*) as well.

In literature, the field in the humanities most directly affected by the censorship issue, I think the most important point is that religious, philosophical, and cultural beliefs and values are most vividly and appealingly presented in fictional literature. Those who believe that education is fundamentally *formation* know there is, of course, a connection between the world of belief and its artistic expression through the human artist. This connection exists whether we are talking about Charles Dickens or Judy Blume.

It is *always* values and beliefs that are the issue, and this fact takes us back again to the question of the nature of our common culture. If educators really do hold to the assumption that there is a common culture that can be passed on in the public school system, they are going to have to come to grips with all of the conflicting traditions that make up the

total fabric. For starters, it is worth finding out what makes modern Christian writers tick. Exploring such writers as Dostoevsky, C.S. Lewis, Flannery O'Connor, and Walker Percy brings interesting insights into the modern human condition including especially questions of human purpose.

1986 REPORT ON TRENDS AND ISSUES— NCTE COMMISSIONS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

Compiled by Michael Spooner and Charles Suhor

Commission on Literature

The Commission on Literature (Darwin Turner, Director) found more negative than positive trends and issues in the teaching of literature. *A positive sign is the effort of some schools to return to an English curriculum which emphasizes literature*—in addition to writing and speaking—as an important component of the discipline. The Commission applauded the *increased attention to literature in NCTE journals and convention sessions.*

The group considered several alarming trends and issues. There is *a new censorship threat*—"Accuracy in Academia," a group that sends representatives into the classrooms to report on "liberal" views in lectures and discussions. *Continuing problems exist in the realm of minority literature.* For example, publishers are producing few new books of Black literature, and books important to the teaching of Black literature are being allowed to go out of print or out of stock. Also, minority literature is disappearing from many textbooks and anthologies. The Commission viewed as an ongoing trend the fact that *teachers and students lack critical skills for reading literature.* Teachers, moreover, have not made full use of literary theory in their classroom instruction. Students often show little knowledge of even the basic terminology used in analyses of literature.

Another negative trend is teachers' *lack of discrimination in the selection of works for study*—especially, selection of less than challenging literature for adolescents. Commission members *deplored the continuing trend to substitute the visual experience* (film, videotape) in classrooms for the experience of reading literary works. The Commission lamented the decline in NCTE trade publishers or trade divisions of publishers among exhibitors at the NCTE annual convention. Publishers seem to feel that members of NCTE are interested only in anthologies and textbooks, not in literary works. The Commission expressed concern about the *effects of budgetary restraints on the teaching of literature.* As budgets are cut, schools restrict their library purchases and eliminate supplementary texts, limiting the range of works available to students and forcing teachers to depend on the literary choices made by editors of textbooks.

The Commission *deplored the division of English departments* into literature and composition departments which is threatening many college and even high school English departments. The Commission reiterated its concern that *school boards and others* calling for "the basics" *seem to exclude literature from their definition of "basics."* Members also expressed *fears about the trend toward national testing of competency in literature.* Aware that their effectiveness as teachers may be evaluated according to their students' performances on these tests, many teachers may begin emphasizing memorization of names and familiarity with test items rather than promoting a love and understanding of literature.

The Commission observed *both positive and negative possibilities in the popular current demand for a core or canon of literary study.* Under the best of circumstances, such a canon might offer students a worthwhile structure for study of literature; on the other hand, the "core" might become a negative force, limiting the diversity of materials for classrooms, especially minority literatures, and discouraging the creativity of teachers. Another issue about which the Commission expressed ambivalence is the proposed *National Assessment Test in literature for high school juniors.* While it is possible that the test will promote a greater interest in literature, most members argued that the test will likely not diminish schools' emphasis on composition at the expense of literature studies.

Are School Censorship Pressures Increasing?

Lee Burress

Past chair of NCTE's Standing Committee Against Censorship and Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin, Lee Burress has for many years been an outspoken opponent of censorship. He is co-author (with Edward Jenkinson) of The Students' Right to Know *(NCTE). Here he looks at whether or not censorship is a growing problem.*

Although there is substantial evidence that censorship pressures on the public schools have increased greatly across the last three decades, some writers still refuse to recognize the growing problems faced by the schools today. An expression of this attitude appeared in the *School Library Media Quarterly* (Fall, 1982), in which Kenneth Taylor voiced doubt that school censorship cases are increasing. Taylor also expressed skepticism concerning the various surveys of censorship problems sponsored by NCTE, its affiliates and other groups, which seem to provide evidence of increased censorship pressures. Since Taylor expresses views held by a number of people, the issues he raises merit detailed analysis.

I believe that the evidence of increased censorship pressure is very persuasive. Such studies of censorship carried out by Carolyn Peterson, Ellen Last, James Baxter, and Joseph Bryson, to mention only a few students of this subject, also confirm the judgment that censorship is an increasingly common part of school life.[1]

Is Censorship Increasing?

There are several reasons why this is probably the case. There has been a significant change in the English literature curriculum and in literature texts available for use in the schools with the rise of inexpensive paperback books. The availability of paperback books coincided with a shift from literature texts that were dominated by British writers and nineteenth century American writers to materials from the twentieth century, primarily American. There has been a significant increase in size and composition of school libraries. An increasing proportion of the school age population is in high school. Many young people in school today already have more education than their parents had. And, of course, when the parents of today's students were in school, they used more traditional literature texts than their offspring are now using. Over one quarter of the current Wisconsin adult population are not high school graduates — that is slightly over one million persons. Similar figures are true for other states. Several serious social problems have developed in recent decades, problems which the school is wrongly held responsible for, such as drug use, teenage pregnancy, and

violence in the schools. A full discussion of these issues may be found in "Ten Reasons for the Recent Increase in School Censorship Pressures," *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling*, 17 (October, 1982), pp. 13-25.

In his article, Mr. Taylor implies that current defenders of intellectual freedom ignore the censorship pressures in the schools prior to 1950. However, it is well known that information about evolution disappeared from school texts after the Scopes trial and that there were attacks on social studies texts written by Magruder, Muzzey and Rugg in the late thirties and forties as Nelson and Roberts pointed out in *The Censors and the Schools* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1963). The NCTE survey that Taylor attacks deals with literature texts, not with biology or social studies. In fact, there is little evidence that school literature texts were the object of criticism or attack prior to 1950 to any significant degree. Attacks did occur on *Oliver Twist* or *The Merchant of Venice*, but they were infrequent in comparison to the documented challenges to 800 or more differing titles since 1950.

Mr. Taylor's charges reflect what is probably a general unawareness of the substantial body of scholarly studies on this subject; more than twenty doctoral dissertations and several master theses have been prepared on school censorship problems. These studies amply demonstrate the greatly increasing degree of pressure on the schools, and they confirm the conclusions of the various surveys carried out by NCTE or its affiliates and surveys carried out by such other groups as the American Library Association.

Gathering Information

Mr. Taylor criticizes the surveys as bearing a closer relationship to the experiences and perceptions of the respondents, that is to teachers and librarians, than to the "actual facts." Moreover, Mr. Taylor speaks as though there were some immediate way one could find out the "actual facts" without depending on some mediating method of investigation. He implies that there is a method to approximate the "actual facts" without the mediation of surveys, questionnaires, case histories or the appropriate professional literature, though he never describes any such method. A researcher cannot grasp reality in a way that he or she can say, "I have the actual facts without any mediating method of investigation."

Elsewhere in his article, Mr. Taylor says, "For more helpful information, we should be looking directly to the public in order to learn about its inquiries regarding school programs and materials." It would be interesting to know how Mr. Taylor expects teachers and librarians to look directly at the public without using surveys, case studies, or the professional literature.

Carolyn Peterson in her doctoral dissertation compared questionnaire surveys with information from the newspaper, from *The Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom*, and other published material. She concluded that

"the questionnaire as a research instrument may better expose the subtleties of self-censorship and selection based on student desires and abilities, than the newspaper/journal accounts which are more likely to emphasize the more flagrant and gross examples of censorship."[2] Peterson compared published reports of censorship events in a given state with information about the incidents of censorship in the same state as elicited by an NCTE affiliate survey. She demonstrated that the published reports were only a small fraction of the total number of censorship events. Mr. Taylor suggested that if the rate of censorship is increasing, then "we must be experiencing an unprecedented alienation of those people whose support and participation we so badly need." That a considerable degree of such alienation is occurring is suggested by the rapid rate of development of private schools, along with the continuing refusal of citizens to vote bonds for school purposes. Demagogic attacks by politicians, evangelists, and right wing think groups do not suggest support for the public schools. That there is such alienation seems, unfortunately, increasingly evident.

Mr. Taylor speaks of the ambiguity of the terms used in the NCTE report, while apparently ignoring the introductory comment that agrees with Mr. Taylor about the difficulty of measuring this form of human behavior. The report states that the conclusions of the study should be regarded as "indicative rather than absolutely conclusive." Surveys give us probable knowledge, not absolute knowledge. But the NCTE surveys report information that is supported by at least twenty other studies.

Mr. Taylor objects to "exaggerations" or "distortions" of NCTE reports. That newspapers exaggerate or sensationalize NCTE reports is hardly the fault of the reports. Newspapers regularly distort and exaggerate many kinds of reports as almost any experience with a printed interview illustrates.

Mr. Taylor is apparently aware of only two surveys by the NCTE. However, since 1965 there have been four NCTE questionnaire surveys of the perceptions of English teachers or librarians about the problems they have encountered in selecting and using literary materials in the public schools. These surveys used essentially the same questionnaire, a copy of which is in the book, *Dealing with Censorship*. The four national surveys elicited the following frequency of reports of challenges to school materials (percent of returns indicating cases of censorship).

	1966 Survey	1973 Survey	1977 Survey	1982 Survey
Books	20%	28%	30%	34%
Periodicals	na	na	8.5%	17%
Films	na	na	7.5%	8%

The 1982 NCTE Survey

Of the forty-eight most frequently challenged books reported in the 1982 survey, the respondents indicated that some form of censorship — removal from a recommended list, removal from classroom use, or removal from

the library — occurred about 54% of the time. Two percent of the cases were pending; the remainder of the cases resulted in denying the request to censor the book or in providing an alternative assignment.

In an effort to follow up the 1982 survey, 185 school librarians who did not respond to the questionnaire were telephoned in May, 1982. Forty schools could not be reached by telephone. Forty-one schools reported that the library had no telephone or there was no librarian or the librarian was in class or school was out for the season. Fourteen librarians refused to be surveyed; one said it was against school policy; others did not explain. The resulting ninety telephone calls elicited much information. Of the ninety librarians to whom we talked, 25.5% reported challenges to school material. This is a smaller figure than the 34% who reported challenges and objections to books in the written responses. However, it is not greatly smaller; it confirms that there is substantial pressure on the schools that did not answer the questionnaire. It also made clear that some librarians did not answer the questionnaire for reasons other than the absence of censorship pressure.

Mr. Taylor implies that it is wrong to equate criticism or objections to learning materials with school censorship pressures. However the frequency with which an objection results in the removal of a book or periodical seems to justify using such terms as "objections" or "complaints" or "challenges" as referring to a form of censorship pressure. There are many reports showing that a single telephone call, a single verbal objection to an administrator, resulted in some form of censorship — the removal of a book from the library, from a reading list, from use in a class. In fact, it is probably true that more school censorship of the current holdings of school libraries results from a single complaint by a parent than from any other source. Moreover, it seems very likely that many teachers, librarians, and administrators are so intimidated by a single call or the fear of a single complaint that materials are never ordered or are removed after any criticism, even in a nearby school. Since several teachers have been fired since 1950 for using challenged books, this attitude on their part is understandable.

The 1982 survey, which was sent to a sample of school librarians (2300 in all), based on the distribution of students by size of school and by student population in the various states, resulted in 960 questionnaires being returned. The tables at the end of this article show the distribution of objections, the nature of the objections, and the disposition of challenges, objections or complaints to some of the several most frequently challenged books. It is noteworthy that a substantial proportion of the books were subjected to some form of censorship as a result of these complaints, objections, criticism, or challenge. It is reasonable to regard this kind of social pressure as censorious, since it removes from use in the schools material that seems quite justifiable on the basis of professionally acceptable standards of selection or of curriculum use.

Is Censorship Based on Rational Thought?

Mr. Taylor objects to the terms "capricious" and "irrational" in the report. He implies that such terms are inappropriate for use by those who resist the kind of censoriousness described in Tables I and II. He implies, therefore, that the critics of the various books listed in these tables are not capricious or are not irrational in their objections to these books.

That censorship is capricious seems very clear. Among the characteristics of the books under current attack is their contemporary nature, their generally American authorship, and their realistic treatment of their subjects. Every school library contains hundreds of books with these qualities. In fact, if every novel with these qualities were removed from the school libraries, the result would be many empty shelves. It is capricious to attack *A Farewell to Arms* and leave hundreds of similar books in the school library, books that are less well written perhaps but with a similarly realistic treatment of the subject. Carlton J. Thaxton made this same point in his master's thesis in 1958, a study of 24 frequently challenged novels. He referred to the "haphazard and nebulous way in which many censors work." Moreover, as Carolyn Peterson observed in her doctoral dissertation, much of the criticism of the literature books used in the schools consists of "epithets," not meaningful criticism.

That censorship pressure is irrational also seems a reasonable judgment. Five of the most popular (and scholarly) dictionaries were disapproved for use in Texas. As a result, in several other communities in the United States (Eldon, Missouri, and Cedar Lake, Indiana, for example), dictionaries were also attacked. Apparently, for young people to be able to read dictionary definitions of such widely used words as "bed," "fag," "horny," "hot," and "knock" (as in "knock up") is believed by some people to influence their moral judgments and actions. I submit that this is patently irrational.

The degree to which some censors have a magical belief in the efficacy of words cannot be fully demonstrated in this short paper. But clearly a motive of some censors is the belief that there is a direct connection between "unpleasant" words and the reality described by the words (in "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," for example, saying the right word makes the wall open). Censorship based on magical beliefs is irrational. The frequency of magical belief in the power of words is made clear in several discussions of current censorship problems including two recent doctoral dissertations.[3]

Of the two main kinds of censorship, moral and political, political censorship is the more rational, since it attempts to prevent dissemination of information critical of the authorities in power. In this respect, the Gablers at times are rational, since a recurrent Gabler theme consists of objections to any criticism of a white, male, Protestant control of the culture of the United States, as Ellen Last has pointed out in her recent study of objections by the Texas critics to English literature texts proposed for Texas in 1978. However, most American school censorship is moral in nature rather than

political, though political motives are not absent from American school censorship. Frequently the political motive is hidden under an alleged moral objection as may be the case with objections to *The Grapes of Wrath*, as I attempted to explain elsewhere.[4] But Milton was correct in asserting that in books we may safely scout the regions of sin and evil. A school superintendent who intercepted one of my questionnaires wrote to me complaining that he had several boxes full of dirty books in his attic which his children had accumulated in their English classes. He concluded his letter by saying that his children did not need dirty books so long as there are taverns in Wisconsin. I believe that a wise parent would prefer to have his children learn of the terrible consequences of sin and evil from books, rather than in the taverns of Wisconsin.

The Gablers

Mr. Taylor represents, no doubt, the considerable constituency of the Gablers, whom he refers to as "much maligned." He says: "They do their homework thoroughly, know textbook content in impressive detail, and share their information with others."

If Taylor means the dictionary definition of the term "malign" as "to speak evil of" or "to utter injuriously misleading or false reports about," he gives no evidence or documentation to support those charges. The Gablers have been criticized, but not personally, to the best of my knowledge. They are no doubt decent, well-meaning people. Both having entered the public and political arena with strong views about education, they have no exemption from public debate. Mr. Taylor says that they do not wish to "replace the curriculum." That is an odd judgment, since it is reasonable to believe that the Gablers do wish to eliminate evolution from consideration in biology texts and have had considerable success in that direction, as the reports from Wayne Moyer of People for the American Way indicate. The Gablers also seem to wish to replace the contemporary curriculum in literature and language with late nineteenth or early twentieth century material and pedagogical methods.

Ellen Last's doctoral dissertation was a study of the objections to certain literature anthologies that came up for consideration in Texas in 1978. She reviewed 350 pages of testimony against the proposed anthologies and provided much information to use in considering the role of the Gablers. Last summarized her study of the Gablers' objections to various anthologies by saying that they call for a curriculum that is basically nineteenth century in its emphasis on Protestant Christianity and on male, white, middle-class values and language. Last reports that "the Gablers and several other [protestors] also attack with great intensity works by women and by foreign and minority authors."

Mr. Taylor speaks approvingly of the reviewing procedures of the Gablers. Ellen Last describes those procedures in detail in her dissertation. She reports that a personal response to the various literary items dominated the Gabler presentation, rather than an analysis of the nature of the work itself. Last

used a computer to search for distribution of various words in the Gablers' presentation. She programmed the computer to search for 25 frequently used terms of literary discourse. Only nine of these words appear in the Gabler material; only such words as "story," "poem," and the like are used by Gablers. But what does appear very often are such terms as: "foolishness," "ridiculous," "nonsense," "this is not literature" and similar expressions of disapprobation, with no attention to the thematic or symbolic nature of the work in question.

Examining the detailed analysis prepared in the Last dissertation, one wonders if Mr. Taylor's favorable report of the work of the Gablers rests on a similarly detailed investigation of their work. Last provides the following sample of the Gabler analyses. According to Last, it is "the Gabler's description of 'Minority Poem,' in which the poet compares minorities in America to the peelings left out of the apple pie. The detailed comment on the poem is typical of several comments on the content of minority literature."

> This is *not a poem*. It is a statement written in the style of a poem, blank verse notwithstanding. Instead of feeling sorry for himself, better the author read and apply examples such as William Ernest Henley's "in victus [sic]." Quote: "I am the master of my fate, I am the Captain of my soul!" or Rudyeard [sic] Kipling's "if" or "I Am An American" by Elias Lieberman, or excerpts from the life of George Washington Carver who didn't sit around feeling sorry for himself — he *did* something! Think positive — think inspiration — think independent — think American.

In 1978, the Texas critics objected to the following list of authors: Thoreau, Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, Cather, Crane, Dickinson, Twain, Wharton, Steinbeck, Lewis, Hemingway, Anderson, Sandburg, Frost, Pound, Amy Lowell, Robert Lowell, Tennessee Williams, William Carlos Williams, Baldwin, Hughes, and Millay. The elimination of those authors would certainly change the American school curriculum. It would be interesting to know if Mr. Taylor speaks generally for the Gabler constituency in an effort to drop those authors from the school curriculum in English.

Mr. Taylor also suggests that the Gablers are relatively ineffective. That seems not consistent with the report by Ellen Last that, since 1978, the story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson has disappeared from all the major anthologies. The size of the Texas market, together with the apparent unwillingness of publishers to prepare variant editions certainly makes control by a small group in Texas possible. Should that small group of people (seventeen persons signed objections to the various anthologies proposed in 1978) led by the Gablers control the content of literature for the whole United States?

Jumping to Erroneous Conclusions

Mr. Taylor asks why *The Catcher in the Rye* is frequently used in the schools, implying some dark conspiracy of "commercial interests." It is fairly clear that *Catcher* came into school use because of its popularity

with the student audience. Only some fourteen years after the book was published did it begin to make the various recommended lists. There is some evidence that it is no longer so widely popular, nor so widely used in the classrooms, though it remains in the libraries, no doubt.

Mr. Taylor makes a comment which in all probability refers to Judy Blume's book *Deenie*. In so doing, he joins a number of people across the country who have attacked that book, as reports from Atlanta, Georgia, and Peoria, Illinois, illustrate. Taylor refers to "stories of little girls masturbating" which implies a plethora of such stories, though Taylor does not mention any titles, perhaps because he has not read any such books. A report in the *Chicago Tribune* for November 10, 1984, concerning the temporary removal of three Judy Blume books from the school libraries of Peoria, Illinois, characterizes *Deenie* as a book about "a girl's sexual awakening." Such a characterization of that book can only have come from someone who had not read the book. Perhaps Mr. Taylor relies on undependable newspaper reports for the content of books as well as for efforts to study the problem of school censorship in a scholarly way.

Conclusion

It seems clear, then, that censorship efforts continue to increase. The evidence gathered from those who face those efforts every day — teachers and librarians — is overwhelming. That these censorship efforts are frequently based on irrational reactions rather than careful analysis does not make them any less dangerous, however.

Notes

1. For Peterson, Last, and Baxter see the accompanying bibliography. See also Joseph E. Bryson and Elizabeth W. Detty, *Censorship of Public School Library and Instructional Material*, Charlottesville, Virginia: The Michie Company, 1982.

2. Peterson, Carolyn. *A Study of Censorship Affecting the Secondary School English Literature 1968-1974*. Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1975.

3. Last, Ellen. *Textbook Selection or Censorship: An Analysis of the Complaints Filed in Relation to Three Major Literature Series Proposed for Adoption in Texas in 1978*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1984.

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Table I
Objectors and Objections to 304 Books
1982 Survey

	PA	LI	AA	T	EC	A	BE	C	S	N	LG	
Obscene, Bad Language	142	9	1	7	-	2	3	3	7	9	-	183
Sexual References	65	6		9	1	7	1		4	2	4	99
Not Appropriate	18	5		1		3	1	1	2			31
Obscene Pics, Nudity	3	3		5		1		1	1	1		15
Violence	10	1		1				1				13
Moral Values	7	1		1								9
Drugs	6								1			7
Religious Ideas	6			1				4	3			14
Racial Ideas	12								1			13
Trash	3			2							5	
Distorted View of Life	3										3	
Witches, Occult	7			3				1	1		12	
Marriage & Family	2										2	
Not Accurate	2		1	2			1					6
Anti-War	1											1
Political Ideas	1						4					5
Humanism	1							2				3
Vulgar				1								1
Critical of Parents				1								1
Subject Matter	12	1		4				1	1			19
No Reason	25	1		3			1		1	23		54
Corrupts Youth/ Condones Bad Behavior	1							1				2
Evolution								2				2
Too Realistic View of Vietnam War				1								1
Author's Lifestyle	1											1
Total	328	28	1	42	1	13	11	17	22	35	4	502

KEY: PA = Parents
LI = Librarian
AA = Administrative Assistant
T = Teacher
EC = English Chair
A = Administrators
BE = Board of Education
C = Clergy
S = Students
NL = Not Listed
LG = Local Group

Table II
Disposition of Cases for Most Frequently Challenged Books, 1982

Title	Request Denied	Some Form of Censorship	Pending
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn	3	2	2
Anthology of New York Poets		2	
Are You in the House Alone?		3	
Ball Four Plus Ball Five	1	1	
Bellvue is a State of Mind	1	1	
Black Like Me	1	1	
Brave New World	2	1	
Catch-22	2		
Catcher in the Rye	10	8	1
Chocolate War	2		
Daddy Was a Numbers Runner		2	
Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test		4	
The Exorcist	2	2	
Forever	5	8	
Go Ask Alice	18	16	
Grapes of Wrath	3	3	
Hard Feelings	2	1	
Headman	1	2	
A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich		7	
If Peale Street Could Talk		3	
I Hate To Talk About Your Mother	1	2	
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings	1	1	
I, Pig	1	1	
It's OK If You Don't Love Me	1	5	
Johnny Got His Gun	2	1	
Killing Mr. Griffin	2		
The Learning Tree	2	3	
Lord of the Flies	1	2	
The Lottery		2	
Love Story		2	
Manchild in the Promised Land	1	2	
Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones	1	1	
My Darling, My Hamburger	4	1	
Native Son		2	
1984	1	1	
None of the Above	1	1	
All books on the occult	2	1	
Of Mice and Men	3	6	
Our Bodies, Ourselves	8	8	
Run, Shelley, Run	2	1	
A Separate Peace		1	
Sex: Telling It Straight	1	1	
Slaughterhouse-Five	2	4	1
Summer of Forty-Two		2	
Then Again, Maybe I Won't	1	2	
To Kill a Mockingbird	2	1	
A Way of Love, A Way of Life	1	1	
Winning	1	2	
Totals	95	114	4
Percentage	44.5%	53.8%	1.7%
Total Cases			213

Sources of Censorship Pressures

Judith F. Krug

Librarians face controversy about selection of books at least as often as do English teachers. The American Library Association has been a strong champion of the rights of readers to select their own books and librarians to make professional decisions about library collections. Judith Krug, director of ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom, has spoken out forcefully in this regard in writing, at national meetings, and on television. Here she discusses several directions that censorship efforts are currently taking.

The fact that the majority of censorship attempts are directed toward materials in schools should not come as a surprise to anyone. First, schools educate children. Second, they are funded by taxes. Children and taxes — especially other peoples' children and taxes — make for a volatile combination. This is especially true when the materials used to educate children are believed to violate the value systems held by those people.

Several types of censorship pressures currently are being brought to bear on school materials. They include complaints that the materials promote secular humanism, that they violate the Hatch Amendment, that they are not "balanced," or that they include inappropriate subject areas. For the most part, these pressures are not succeeding.

Secular humanism has been defined by the religious fundamentalists and other conservatives as "faith in man instead of faith in God," a "no-God" religion. Among other complaints, "secular humanism" is charged with:

1. Promoting situation ethics where there are no rights or wrongs.
2. Promoting the teaching of evolution.
3. Negating Christianity by denying the existence of the supernatural, of salvation, of heaven or hell.
4. Promoting teaching about death.
5. Promoting the idea of a world community, thereby negating patriotism.
6. Promoting sexual freedom by belittling modesty, purity, chastity, and abstinence while accepting abortion, premarital sex, homosexuality, and lesbianism.
7. Promoting the right of children to read *anything* the school provides.

In reality, humanism is a way of looking at our world which emphasizes the importance of human beings, their nature and their place in their universe.

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Today, humanistic education centers around the humanities, which usually include religion, philosophy, languages, literature, history, and the arts. Together, the subjects have humanistic ideals at their center. They try to interpret the meaning of life, rather than just describing the physical world or society.

One offshoot of the pressures to eliminate secular humanism from the schools is the so-called Hatch Amendment regulations. The regulations require parental consent before students take part in federally funded "psychiatric or psychological experimentation, testing or treatment." A letter-writing campaign, initiated by Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, has parents claiming that classroom activity can fall within the definition of "psychiatric or psychological exam or test." They are demanding that teachers get their written permission before teaching their children any of 34 "sensitive topics" such as death, nuclear war, drug or alcohol abuse, or premarital sex.

Although efforts to enforce the regulations have spread to the initiation of regulations aimed at state-funded programs, Secretary of Education William J. Bennett recently stated that most classroom activities do not meet the "stringent requirements" for coverage under the amendment.

In another ploy to control the content of school materials, the word "balance" has come to mean a numerical standard. In other words, if there is material in a classroom or in a library on one "side" of an issue, then there *must* be material on the other "side"; each piece of material is assigned a number, e.g., 18 books in favor of abortion, 4 against abortion; 6 magazine articles decrying nuclear war, 3 promoting increased defense, including nuclear arms. The "balance" argument falls of its own weight since it does not recognize gradations of ideas and varying perceptions of issues. "Balance" is strictly a numbers game, reflecting little reality.

Finally, attempts are being made to censor entire subject areas. One title might be singled out, e.g., a book on homosexuality, sex education, or mythology, but the demand is to remove all materials "like it." Such demands are rarely successful, partially due to the impossibility of reviewing every piece of material in a school to identify those which contain, in whole or in part, information deemed "inappropriate."

The fact that would-be censors are successful only half of the time does not seem to deter them. They know — as educators do — that the search for truth begins in books and other materials. In the process of searching for truth and acquiring knowledge, young people learn to think; they acquire the powers of discrimination. These are the tools which will help them function effectively as citizens in our constitutional republic. And that is why educators will continue to fight all censorship attempts. In the end, our form of government can function only when there is an enlightened citizenry. Developing that enlightened citizenry is our responsibility.

Hidden Censorship: Fact or Fiction?

Janis H. Bruwelheide

Censorship controversies not only strike at books and other printed materials. Films and pictures, slides and tapes have nearly as often raised concern among parents and become the targets of censorship. Janis Bruwelheide, chair of the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology and a professor at Montana State University, looks at the censorship or selection problem from the perspective of audio and visual media.

While reading an article by Nat Hentoff entitled "The Dumbing of America," I became intrigued by the concept of hidden censorship or concealed censorship. This type of censorship occurs inside a publisher's office — censorship which is known only to editors, authors, and the sales department. It may be more dangerous than any other form of censorship or the efforts of the professional censors combined. During the past years such censorship has increased so much that the college and university market has been affected. Some professors have remarked that, in certain subject areas, college texts have been geared down to a level which would once have been appropriate for tenth graders. Several reputable publishers have bowdlerized not only dictionaries and other reference work, textbooks, and paperbacks, but also films. Such actions have happened, in part, in order to sell material to the highly lucrative Texas market.

Examples of Hidden Censorship

How does hidden censorship specifically affect us as teachers? The ways are numerous. Library media professionals working in schools are charged with the responsibility of curriculum support through provision of depth, breadth, and relevance in materials that are included in the collection. If diluted instructional materials are used, the library media center will have to provide more supplementary materials for students and faculty; and doing so will be expensive. One type of hidden censorship relates to textbooks. Classroom teachers have been faced with bowdlerized or rewritten pieces in literature anthologies. The textbooks and teachers' guides usually do not mention these changes, and the users may be unaware of changes or omissions until study of the piece is begun. Examples of such excisions are the omission of lines from Shakespeare's plays for school anthologies and rewriting of passages which may offend.

A second example of hidden censorship involves reference books, especially some dictionaries and encyclopedias. The publishers of the high school edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary*, for instance, offered to delete several words labelled offensive by Texas critics in 1981. On the other hand, G. & C. Merriam Company refused to do so saying that such an action would be irresponsible lexicography.

A third example of hidden censorship deals with school book club expurgation practices. The Intellectual Freedom Committee of the American Library Association's Young Adult Services Division completed research in 1984 which showed that three major school book clubs were routinely expurgating books and not informing the consumer that the books had been changed. Books were advertised and sold under the original title even though the books had been expurgated. Occasionally the books were retitled, sometimes without the author's permission. Keresey presented detailed results of the investigation in her article in *Top of the News*. Recently, the companies sponsoring these book clubs have agreed to label expurgated books so that purchasers can make informed choices.

A fourth example of hidden censorship involves some film companies' distributing two versions of selected instructional films. Without consulting — or, in fact, even informing — the purchasers, these film companies supplied the versions they considered appropriate for those purchasers and the locales in which the films would be used. The purchasers, meanwhile, were unaware that there were two versions. Recently, offending companies have agreed to label such films as "school editions," and this information will appear near the copyright notice for the film.

The Effects of Hidden Censorship

There are many reasons to be concerned about hidden censorship. We must not overlook censored materials as one of the major culprits for what has been termed "the rising tide of mediocrity in education." In addition, not only has our freedom of choice been restricted but also our access to information at all levels. Much additional harm may be done to students in curriculum areas where access to information is already weakened through censored textbooks and other materials. When expurgation is not made clear to students and faculty, there has been a false representation of the materials. An expurgated piece is not the same as the original and should not be advertised as such.

Resisting Hidden Censorship

What can we do about hidden censorship? We can be alert and watch for examples of expurgation. If unidentified examples are found, we can complain loudly to offending companies and boycott their materials. This tactic was recently used in California regarding science materials, and it was effective. The materials were improved and resubmitted for state adoption. We can also write selection policies for instructional materials which prohibit use of expurgated materials. Perhaps it is time that we take a very close look at the instructional materials we are being given by publishers and producers. One thing that is certain, no guarantees exist that diluted and possibly distorted materials will decrease in number unless protests are heard.

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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The NCTE Commission on Composition invites educators at all levels — elementary, middle, secondary, college — to submit manuscripts for a proposed publication *Political Forces Affecting the Writing Classroom K-16* reflecting its position on the essential principles in the teaching of composition. (See "Teaching Composition: A Position Statement," available through NCTE.)

Authors should not only summarize the current state of knowledge on the various issues suggested in the Statement, but they should shape this knowledge into arguments educators who want to promote good writing instruction can use with uninformed administrators, teachers, parents, and legislators. These essays may address grammar, tests, grades, computers, peer tutors, learning centers, writing within the community, basic writers, as well as other subjects which develop ideas and assumptions suggested by the Statement.

Manuscripts may range in length from ten to twenty-five pages, doubled-spaced typed. The 1984 MLA parenthetical documentation in author and work style should be used with "Works Cited" appearing on a separate page. Two copies should be submitted, with the author's name, address, and phone number on the title page attached to the front of each copy. Manuscripts should be mailed by September, 30 1986, to Joyce Armstrong Carroll, Department of English and Writing, McMurry College, Abilene, TX 79697.

Whose Truth? Bias in Textbooks

Dan Fleming

When textbooks present different kinds of people, different issues, different historical events, they can be balanced or continue old stereotypes. Dan Fleming, a professor at Virginia Tech, has studied the effectiveness of current textbooks in dealing with controversial issues. He examines some of the pressures that act on textbook authors and explores some of the results of those pressures.

The past two years have seen a dramatic increase in the amount of attention focused on the quality of textbooks used in public schools. The Council of State School Officers and the National Assocation of State School Boards of Education have established a Project on the Quality of Textbooks and Instructional Materials. States such as California have adopted new standards seeking to put more content and substance into textbooks. Efforts such as these have placed textbook publishes in a quandry as they fear efforts to comply with new requirements, such as those in California to include classical literature, may bring then into conflict with other regulations pertaining to social content. An additional concern is that by "making the content more substantial, they may bring the wrath of special interest groups and book protestors down upon them" (Currence, p. 6). An example of such conflict is that the inclusion of a classical work of literature or a primary source in history may violate some other standard prohibiting males and females from being potrayed in a stereotyped role. Problems that have emerged from the required reading of *Huckleberry Finn* illustrate the problem of differing views of what constitutes racism in literature.

A second related factor that will undoubtedy cause additional difficulties for the textbook industry is the resurgence of interest in critical thinking. The very nature of critical thinking requires the opportunity to examine diverse views and sources, often controversial. As a result special interest groups will again be in full cry against such materials.

The best known organized effort to censor textbooks has been that of Mel and Norma Gabler of Texas. For some two decades, the Gablers have been working to influence the content of textbooks to reflect their ideas of the world society. They provide reviews of textbooks and express concern over those that "encourage students to think for themselves." Such books are seen by the Gablers and their supporters as "invasions of privacy and examples of secular humanism" (Schormberg, p. 60).

The Gablers definitely have influence. Half of the state level respondents to a national censorship survey indicated that the Gablers' activities had influenced the textbook adoption process in their state (Schormberg, p. 60). Under the heading of Educational Research Analysts, the Gablers'

credo has been, "Until textbooks are changed, there is no possibility that crime, violence, venereal disease and abortion rates will decrease" (Schormberg, p. 60).

The most common term associated with objections by the critics from the right is that of secular humanism, usually defined as a belief or faith in man instead of God. Judith Krug, Director, Office for Intellectual Freedom, the American Library Association, lists seven charges made by the religious conservatives against secular humanism. (These are listed in the article by Krug reprinted elsewhere in the *Bulletin*.) Of course, the most concrete target for the seven concerns listed by Krug is the textbook. Comparing the Krug list with the new California standards for textbooks that require "themes that broaden students' awareness of their own and other societies" and "works that involve values such as truth, justice and compassion" (Currence, p. 6) allows one readily to see why textbook publishers believe they are skewered on the horns of a dilemma.

Adding further fuel to the fire, we have the position of the Reagan administration being vocally advocated by Education Secretary, William J. Bennett. While on the one hand, national studies and groups of leading scholars are calling for the development of critical thinking and improved scholarship in all aspects of American public school education, we have, on the other side, Secretary Bennett calling on America's schools to "foster a national consensus in support of the Reagan administration's policies in Central America" and to teach that the United States is "morally superior" to the Soviet Union (Richburg, pp. F1, F8). Such closed positions on American foreign policy issues are directly opposed to critical thinking and scholarship. As has always been the case throughout the history of American education, textbooks end up being a political battleground between various seekers of truth, all convinced of the rightness of their personal positions.

All the efforts by various groups ranging from the state of California and the American Library Association to the Gablers and William Bennett are the results of differing viewpoints of truth. These groups and their efforts cause certain points of view or biases to be found in textbooks, particularly in English, social studies, and science texts. Causes of bias are many, including influences such as race, sex, age, nationalism, religion, economic and social class.

Difficulties in Writing Textbooks

No other problem is more perplexing for the scholar engaged in writing a textbook than that of trying to describe or present a complex and many-sided topic in a simplistic and condensed form. Pity for example the expert on American foreign policy who has to cover the Vietnam War in a few paragraphs or the scholar on the Middle East trying to cover the history, geography, economy, and culture of the region in a few pages. As a result of such condensation, the end product is usually barren of both detail and color.

Added to the space limitation problem, we have what noted historian Henry Steele Comager in *The Study and Teaching of History* calls the most difficult obstacle facing the author of a history textbook:

> There is one bias, one prejudice, one obsession, so pervasive and so powerful that it deserves special consideration: nationalism. History which should be the most cosmopolitan of studies, most catholic in its sympathies, most ecumenical in its interest, has, in the past century and a half, become an instrument of nationalism. Nationalism is, no doubt, the most powerful force in modern history, and it is hardly surprising that it should have captured historiography and enslaved historians. (p. 49)

Although nationalism is a great concern in the writing of social studies textbooks, it also permeates all areas of the curriculum.

AHA Expresses Concern

The American Historical Association has had a great interest in the various forms of bias affecting the writing of texts. In a 1966 study of textbooks, the AHA identified some different forms of bias of which authors and readers should be made aware. The report, written by Ray Billington, pointed out several types of bias most frequently encountered by the authors of history textbooks. Most of these types apply to texts in other content areas as well.

a. *Bias of Inertia*. While not truly a bias, it refers to the failure of textbook authors to keep abreast of current scholarship. As a result, outworn legends or half truths may emerge.

b. *Unconscious Falsification*. This results from the writer not being able to divorce himself from the milieu in which the author has been reared. This form is particularly influenced by nationalism where unwittingly glorifying one's own nation while degrading others is easy to do.

c. *Bias by Omission*. This means the selection of facts to present an event. The smaller the space allowed, the greater the chance of omission. Allotting space to events favorable and ignoring those unfavorable to one's nation are common practices.

d. *Bias in the Use of Language*. This is the easiest form to recognize and correct. Unfortunately some believe that, once the language is corrected, the problem concerning bias is over .

e. *Bias by Cumulative Implication*. This form is not instantly perceived but refers to the total tone of a text. If throughout a text, one segment of society is inaccurately portrayed, such as the romantic view of slavery presented in the Virginia history texts of the 1950's, the accumulated total becomes one of a major distortion (Billington, pp. 5-14).

Of the five types presented above, only bias in language is fairly easy to identify and fortunately much progress has been in this form.

Examples of Bias in Textbooks

Several important points should be kept in mind when examining textbooks. One general rule is beware of statements that encompass "all" people. If you examine the excerpt below from the seventh-grade history textbook used for many years in Virginia, you will find examples of sweeping generalizations that are biased.

HOW THE SLAVES FELT

> Life among the Negroes of Virginia in slavery times was generally happy. The Negroes went about in a cheerful manner making a living for themselves and for those for whom they worked. They were not so unhappy as some Northerners thought they were, nor were they so happy as some Southerners claimed. The Negroes had their problems and their troubles. But they were not worried by the furious arguments going on between Northerners and Southerners over what should be done with them. In fact, they paid little attention to these arguments. (Simkins, *et al*, p. 376)

You should have discovered several biased statements such as "generally happy" and a "cheerful manner." While no doubt some slaves were happy, some of the time, it is also equally probable that many were not happy and the "cheerful manner" seems even more inaccurate as a descriptive phrase. Sometimes common sense is needed to recognize a slanted point of view. You might have students consider whether or not slaves would be interested in the tremendously heated nationwide debate over ending slavery. What do you think? Would you be interested?

One way to check out the accuracy of the textbook account above is to examine other sources. One source of interest is the autobiography of a famous Virginian, Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*. Compare the description below of Washington's life as a slave with the textbook version.

> I was born a slave on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia. I am not quite sure of the exact place or exact date of my birth, but at any rate I suspect I must have been born somewhere and at some time. As nearly as I have been able to learn, I was born near a cross-roads post-office called Hale's Ford, and the year was 1858 or 1859. . . .
>
> My life had its beginning in the midst of the most miserable, desolate, and discouraging surroundings. This was so, however, not because my owners were especially cruel, for they were not as compared with many others. I was born in a typical log cabin, about fourteen by sixteen feet square. In this cabin I lived with my mother and a brother and sister till after the Civil War, when we were all declared free. . . . (Washington, p. 1)

Obviously Washington did not regard his life as "happy" and "cheerful." Another point raised in the text was that of the "little attention" slaves paid to the arguments over the institution of slavery. Here again is what Washington wrote on this point:

> I have never been able to understand how the slaves throughout the South, completely ignorant as were the masses so far as books or newspapers were concerned, were able to keep themselves so accurately informated about the great National questions that were agitating the country. (Washington, p. 5)

Again, we find the Washington version contradicting the state textbook. What is one to believe? If doubt exists over which account is correct, other sources must be identified and examined. Out of these varying sources, some degree of "truth" will emerge.

When dealing with political events, one finds that as time passes, the "truth" often changes as well. The War in Vietnam is a good example of this changing of "truth." History textbooks published in the early 70's would generally not even mention the Gulf of Tonkin incident that led to a major escalation of the war. Today, historians believe that President Johnson distorted the account of what happened there to gain the support of Congress to expand the U.S. war effort. However textbooks give considerably different versions of this event.

In version one below, the United States seems to have caused the Gulf of Tonkin incident:

(1) In secrecy, the United States began limited bombing of Viet Cong positions and supported commando raids on the North Vietnamese coast. In reprisal for one of the latter, North Vietnamese torpedo boats unsuccessfully attacked two U.S. destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf. (Bragdon, *et al*, p. 757)

Now look at version two of the same event taken from another history textbook:

(2) In August, 1964, North Vietnamese patrol boats attacked American navy ships in the Gulf of Tonkin, about 30 miles off the coast of North Vietnam. (Schwartz, *et al*, p. 467)

There is quite a difference between the two textbooks as to which side was responsible for this incident that directly led to a major expansion of the war effort. In the accounts above, the author in the second book seems to have been a victim of nationalism and decided to make the United States appear to be the "good guy."

One of the most serious problems related closely to the examples just presented is what facts are to be selected for a limited space. Textbooks usually present true information, but by their use of only partial information, divergent descriptions of the same person can result. Read below the two different descriptions of the same person, Ho Chi Minh, for many years the leader of North Vietnam. Version one gives the reader from the United States a rather negative view:

(1) Ho Chi Minh was a dedicated Communist, trained in Soviet Russia and China. (Bragdon, *et al*, p. 731)

but in another textbook he appears in a more positive light:

(2) Ho Chi Minh was an intelligent and resourceful patriot. (Wiltz, p. 700)

Although the two versions are at variance over the same person, both accounts are accurate in their information. A better description would likely include all the facts included in each of the two.

The examples for both the Gulf of Tonkin incident and Ho Chi Minh require the use of other sources beyond the textbook, if the student using the text is to get a more accurate view of an event or person. Even with more sources, students must be made to realize that they are still only obtaining a probability of truth, and a truth that is still changing. Obviously the lack of black and white answers will frustrate many students and teachers, but such is the nature of the content with which they are dealing.

Conclusion

To cope with bias in textbooks, students must acquire critical thinking skills, such as detecting bias, determining the reliability of sources, and determining the accuracy of statements. Acquiring critical thinking skills requires the use of a variety of sources including all forms of mass media. Textbooks are only one limited form of the materials used by students but are an excellent starting point to develop skills in bias recognition. Although the job is difficult, there are concrete places to begin. The textbook should be one of the first sources to evaluate critically for bias, and teachers should urge students to remember it is a starting point, not the end.

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The New Right, Humanism, and "Dirty Books"

June Edwards

One of the chief arguments of those who protest about works of literature used in schools is that those works teach "secular humanism." Here, June Edwards, who is a graduate of Virginia Tech and is now on the faculty of the English Department of Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, analyzes the beliefs of humanists and compares them to the beliefs of what she terms "the New Right."

> As a young man, I devoured everything Zane Grey wrote. . . . Actually, I got burned out on fiction and haven't read a complete novel since I was college age. . . . Almost nothing sold in the secular marketplace is fit for human consumption, because of its anti-moral teachings. (Tim LaHaye, *Battle for the Family*, p. 217)

> God, if you recall, did not warn his people against dirty books. He warned them against high places. (Walker Percy, *Love in the Ruins*, p. 62)

The vice-president of a conservative, suburban Milwaukee school board has secured the removal of a popular psychology book from classroom use because "it reveals humanist philosophy" (Bednarek, p. 17). Supported by other board members, he earlier forced the novel *Vision Quest* from the open shelves of the high schools' libraries and is now working to expunge a sociology textbook. Buoyed by success, he has appeared on radio and television talk shows, written articles for local newspapers, and debated in public forums.

This publicity, however, may be his undoing. The district's teachers union has vowed to unseat both him and his followers in future elections. An educated, angry parent established a group called "Citizens for Enlightened Education." Its two female organizers recently received an award from the Wisconsin Civil Liberties Union for their courageous stand against the anti-intellectualism of the school board's majority. Though censorship thrives in Wisconsin, Virginia, and elsewhere, the signs are strong that educators and parents are fighting back with a justifiable stridency.

Still, the "dirty books" problem remains to cloud our days and dim our enthusiasm for teaching what we love. For some years I have been arguing that English teachers and librarians are taking the wrong approach when confronted with right-wing critics. The censors are yelling "obscene!" and the teachers are politely explaining, "But it's so well written." In this conflict over books, that is not the point. In fact, a well-written book that fits the 1973 Supreme Court's definition of obscenity (*Miller vs. California*) would have far more impact on readers because it *was* well written.

The issue is not the writing quality but the moral quality, and that is what educators must be prepared to defend. Good novels, of course, are

not written for didactic purposes. A writer simply tells a story or presents a slice of life. As Thomas Hardy said in his preface to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, "A novel is an impression and not an argument" (p. 14). Yet morality should certainly be one of the criteria for selecting books for schools, and there is no shortage of moral fiction from which to choose. In his work *On Becoming a Novelist*, John Gardner stated that "the fiction that lasts tends to be 'moral,' that is, it works with a minimum of cynical manipulations and it tends to reach affirmations favorable rather than opposed to life" (p. 86). The difficulty, of course, is that Americans, even in small communities, do not agree on what constitutes morality, on what "affirms life," and educators and librarians are understandably reluctant to become embroiled in nasty battles.

To aid the discussion of what to do about value conflicts and literature books, I shall present here what I believe to be the moral basis for selecting books for public schools, why this runs counter to right-wing beliefs, and what actions educators can take. First, however, I would like to state a few presuppositions. I do not doubt in the least the sincerity of those who object to any of the books that have been protested. This issue of sincerity seems to bother many not caught up in the problem — that schools would oppose people who are so sincere. Sincerity is simply irrelevant. English teachers, too, are sincere. So is everyone else interested in the issue.

Second, we must not view the protestors as a "lunatic fringe," merely nuisances who will eventually go away or see the light. On the contrary, though they are definitely in the minority, they have in recent years gained power far beyond their numbers. The Gablers in Texas, for instance, by influencing their statewide textbook selection committee, determined for years what publishers published and what students across the country read — or more often did not read — in school. The censors have powerful friends in Congress and other high places and are a real threat to our public school system.

Third, these critics have a right to voice their opinion and try to persuade people in non-violent ways. That is the democratic way and we must respect that right. However, we must not become intimidated when what they demand conflicts with the ideas on which our country was founded. Controversy is something educators must live with; schools have always been society's battlegrounds. What is needed is not an end to conflict, but clearer goals, firmer convictions, and stronger defenses.

Finally, the New Right is correct that the war over books is between their narrow concept of religion (which they claim is the only true Christian view) and the broad philosophy known as humanism, which comes in both religious and secular forms — though to New Righters anything they do not agree with is called secular. Humanistic values of the Enlightenment influenced the founding fathers, especially Jefferson, Madison, Adams, Penn, and Franklin, to establish this country and write its basic documents. I believe this same humanism should be the source for public school values, including the selection of English class literature.

New Right Vs. Humanism

A major tenet of the New Right, and fundamentalism in general, is that only God is capable of solving human problems. Human beings are dependent on a supernatural being who makes all decisions with regard to this world, demands obedience and glorification above all else, and is vengeful toward those who disobey his commandments (as interpreted by the New Right).

In contrast, humanists, who come in a variety of forms — agnostics, atheists, church-going believers, and clergy — agree that humans should strive to prevent and solve the complex problems of life on earth and not sit by waiting for divine intervention. We are not puppets on a string but have infinite potential to reason and act. Though some humanists ask for spiritual guidance and some do not, the emphasis is on respect for the mind and on human responsibility for preserving the earth and promoting the welfare of its people. Why, asks the religious humanist, would God give us intelligent, creative minds, and forbid us to use them?

For the New Right, however, the only way to solve problems is through faith and right belief. Conformity is essential. Like The Party in Orwell's *1984*, they insist that all humans think and act alike. To tolerate deviance is to invite the wrath and punishment of a God who resembles Big Brother in almost every way. Born-depraved humans cannot be trusted to think on their own. Parents and teachers must therefore keep tight control over what students read, say and do. Teachers should not send students to the library to do independent research, say the Gablers, for they might discover ideas and facts on their own — a situation the Gablers find "very dangerous" (Martin, p. 268). Freedom of inquiry and expression, the cornerstones of democracy, are thus forbidden. Not for them is Jefferson's assertion: "Is uniformity desirable? No more than of face and stature. Reason and persuasion are the only practicable instruments to make way for these. Free inquiry must be indulged" (Commager, p. 64).

Humanists believe that the means of solving problems and understanding our world is through reason and the scientific method of research applied to all realms of life. No area should be closed to investigation. No data should be hidden or thrown away because it does not fit an ideology. All facts and conclusions should be open to repeated investigations and revisions. Nothing, says a humanist, is ever certain or final, and everything should be open to scrutiny and discussion, including the Bible, democracy, and the philosophy of humanism.

Another sharp distinction between the New Right and humanism is the approach to values. To the New Right, life is polarity in all its aspects. People are either good or bad, weak or strong, masculine or feminine, innocent or guilty, saved or unsaved, Christian (according to their terms) or un-Christian. Nothing can be in-between. Just as one cannot be partially pregnant, one cannot be partially pure. Every situation has only two aspects: the positive or the negative; and a New Right believer always knows which is which. Furthermore, all values are God-given and absolute and exist

on the same level. Stealing is *always* wrong, even if one is freeing a slave from bondage. Having a child out of wedlock is *always* sin, even if one is fourteen years old and has been raped by one's stepfather.

Humanists, however, believe that our culture has come to cherish certain values because of thousands of years of human experience and that these values should be passed on to our children through education and example. Moreover, those values are relative and hierarchical, depending on the particular circumstances. Killing a person is normally wrong, but shooting a terrorist massacring a crowd would be applauded. Stealing property and telling a lie are not necessarily on the same level, nor always wrong. Stealing a loaf of bread to feed starving children or telling the Nazi SS no Jews are living upstairs would be morally right.

For fundamentalists, the purpose of the present life is to prepare for the next. The reward of eternal life will not be given to those who feed the hungry, care for the sick, clothe the poor, and fight oppression, but only to those who worship properly, believe rightly, and live purely — all, of course, as defined by the New Right. The devastations of poverty, discrimination, environmental damage, and warfare are of little concern. In fact, a nuclear holocaust would simply get the chosen to their reward that much faster and the rest of us to wherever we're going. Good works, stresses Jerry Falwell repeatedly, will never get one into heaven, but only "born-again" belief (*Peace*, p. 45 ff.).

In contrast, the purpose of life for humanists is to enjoy this life and help all people to do so. Corliss Lamont, in his *Philosophy of Humanism,* says that humanism is a "philosophy of joyous service for the greater good of all humanity in this natural world" (p. 12). At the top of humanist aims are respect and justice for all persons regardless of sex, race, ethnic origin, sexual preference, religion, handicap, or any other difference. Humanists want *all* people in *all* countries to enjoy what Jefferson proposed for ours in the Declaration of Independence: "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," not in some nebulous future, but right now on this planet. "Beware of those," says United Methodist Wayne K. Clymer, "who speak much of God, but dismiss concern for the poor of the earth, the reduction of armaments, the conservation of the good earth, God's earth, as humanism. We do not exalt God by denigrating human beings" (Webber, p. 35).

The New Right is correct in believing that their attack on public schools is a full-scale war. Compromise is simply not possible. The two positions I have discussed cannot exist side by side in the same classroom or the same school, at least not in matters concerning curriculum, textbooks, and values. One view must predominate, which means the other has lost. We educators think we are compromising when we tell parents their child can choose a different literature book, although the rest of the class will continue to read and discuss the one objected to. The parents get angry, for their purpose has been defeated even though their child never reads the assigned book. Compromise is not part of a value system where everything is polarized. To a fundamentalist parent, either the book remains or it is

taken out. If a book remains, so does the offense. Their goal is not to keep just their own child from reading "trash," but every child.

This aim is easier to understand if we compare it to something we probably all feel is unacceptable — teenage drug use. Can you rest at ease knowing your own child does not use drugs if many of his classmates and friends do? Can you be sure he will not succumb in the future? Have you no responsibility to keep other teenagers from this harm? Should not drug prevention programs be set up so that no one's child will become a user or a pusher? Isn't that an invasion of privacy, an attempt to change the value system of other people's children? Do we have that right?

If you believe that drugs harm children physically, mentally, and socially and that adults should try to stop this abuse, then you can understand the viewpoint of the New Right with regard to the "dirty books" used in English classes. Despite what we teachers believe and say about the books' quality, fundamentalists are convinced that any "four-letter" or sex-related words have the same damaging effect on children as do drugs — maybe worse, since words are magically powerful and their effects impossible to control. If good books can uplift, cannot bad ones destroy? Once something is in the mind of a child, it is beyond the restraining influence of a caring adult. Thus, keeping one child away from a book is not enough. The evil will spread. Peers will pressure their friends to "read it, just once." Teachers, hooked on "pornographic" literature, are pushers with an insidious need to find new addicts in order to sustain their own habit. In libraries the destructive words are there for the taking, attractively displayed and free of charge.

To the New Right, for the government to pay for and encourage the use of these evil books is no different from establishing a place where teenagers could come in, pick up different drugs, check them out at no cost, and take them home to their bedrooms to indulge in as often as they want. It is beyond the comprehension of censors that teachers and librarians would want to, let alone have the right to, give children such dangerous, God-forbidden materials.

There is another point just as important. Even if their own children remain pure and clean, New Right parents are in grave danger because their vengeful God judges the whole nation and not just individuals. According to Falwell, and fundamentalists before him, America was founded by God to be the "New Israel," the nation favored among all others, as long as its citizens worship God and obey His commandments (*Listen* p. 16). We know this is so, points out Tim LaHaye, co-founder and national board member of the Moral Majority, because America has enjoyed the greatest wealth for the most people of any country in the history of the world. Helping people accumulate wealth, through the free enterprise system, is how God bestows His blessings on those who live purely and believe rightly (*Mind*, p. 37). However, because humanistic values have taken over our society and the public school system, says Falwell, "we are not far from the judgment of God upon this great nation of ours" (*Listen*, p. 119).

America will soon be doomed unless New Righters, God's chosen helpers, cleanse our country of all impurities. If they fail in this mission, He will deal with them unmercifully. Thus, getting corrupting books out of schools and libraries is a matter of dire consequence, not only for the religious right's children but for themselves. America will be destroyed, and their immortal souls will be imperiled.

What Should English Teachers Do?

We cannot reason with censors, for in their opinion they are the only ones acting reasonably. Humanists, willfully disobeying "God's commands," are not only out of touch with the "moral majority," but behave in an incredulous, irrational manner. They act as though humans are innately good, or at least a blank slate, rather than innately sinful. They trust most people to act responsibly and care for their fellow beings. They believe humans have the potential to solve problems by using their minds instead of relying solely on prayer. They believe that doing good "unto the least of these" is more righteous than acquiescing to authority and amassing wealth. They are more concerned about improving the present life here on earth for all people than ensuring their own place in eternity through proper faith. In short, they corrupt youth by affirming life on earth rather than condemning this life and preparing for the next.

Defenders of the New Right are not weakening. They are not some day going to slink away. In fact, through their business enterprises and masterful use of television, they are gaining stronger support every day. Critics have a right to voice their opinions, as we all do. But educators have a right, and a responsibility, to resist demands to tear down the wall of separation between church and state established by the founding fathers.

We cannot convert the censors; we might as well not try. It is a different audience we must convince. Our efforts should be aimed at standing firm against unjust demands, writing letters and articles defending our curriculum choices, speaking out in public and private gatherings, going to court whenever necessary, and supporting those individuals and groups, like the "Citizens for Enlightened Education," who have the courage to stand up for democratic principles in public schools. We must persuade parents, fellow teachers, the general public, school boards and legislators that humanism, the philosophy that represents human wisdom, reason and creativity, is the basis for our nation and thus our schools. The books that appear most frequently on censors' lists reflect that philosophy. They have lasted. They affirm life. They are moral. We must hold up our heads and stare down anyone who declares them otherwise.

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Accuracy in Academia: A New Threat to American Universities

Ruth Cline

Although most of the articles in this issue of the Bulletin *concern censorship and selection in schools and libraries, colleges and universities also face this problem. Ruth Cline, who is chair of the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Colorado and co-author of* A Guide to Literature for Young Adults, *discusses a new effort to monitor the words of professors.*

With the prevalent use of initials to signify different groups and organizations in our society, it would be easy to let one more set of initials go unnoticed. That would be a mistake, when we consider the AIA (Accuracy in Academia), its stated purpose, and the chilling implications for college and university professors. But what should we know about this organization?

Purpose of Organization

The statement of purpose for AIA says

> . . . it is formed for the purpose of educating the public, the learned societies, professional educators, and academicians as to desirable standards of accuracy and truth in academic teaching and how to raise professional standards in academia with respect to objective truth and acceptable standards of balance and fairness. . . . The Corporation shall examine cases in which academic performance is alleged to fall short of these standards and it shall publicize its findings. The Corporation shall publish and distribute literature, provide speakers at seminars and other meetings and gatherings, conduct classes, cooperate with other like-minded societies and corporations and individuals, and employ such other means as are deemed feasible by the Board of Directors to communicate to the public its views on the standards of accuracy and truth in academia. (Lawrence, p. 44)

Reed Irvine, Chairman of Accuracy in Academia, says, "Perhaps in 10 or 15 years it will be generally acknowledged that college professors should not be immune from criticism if they spout nonsense to their students and demand that they regurgitate that nonsense in their examination papers if they want passing grades" (Irvine, p. 2).

Time (December 23, 1985) reported Accuracy in Academia claims to have more than 200 anonymous student volunteers ready to monitor and report on classroom lectures at 160 colleges around the country. This broad-based network of students and other volunteers will report on university professors and instructors with a view to "obtaining truth and balance whatever the persuasion. . ." (Lawrence, p. 44). AIA claims that many students have telephoned to express their willingness to be reporters; AIA's job is to weed out students with possible grudges. The information acquired

from student monitors will be compared with that obtained from older people whom AIA expects to recruit through the auditing programs of many state schools which allow older citizens to take courses free of charge. College catalogs are also being studied, problem courses are being spotted, and sympathetic contacts are being identified. The hard science courses and journalism courses will be omitted from scrutiny, and the emphasis will be on political science, economics, history, and sociology. Lawrence says, "We don't see ourselves as a pressure group really going after people. Rather AIA is in the business of informing the public, which has been intimidated by the higher education community" (Marshall, p. 841).

AIA president, Malcolm Lawrence is quoted as saying that $22,000 had already been collected and AIA was getting ready for a mass appeal to 250,000 people for contributions (Marshall, p. 841). This fall they hired Laszlo Csorba, III for their executive director, and they hope to have a staff of 15 in three years.

The parent group of AIA, "Accuracy in Media," has been monitoring the media for the past 16 years, looking for liberal bias which they think is coming directly from the universities. Now they can examine the universities and try to control "the source" of these ideas (Irvine, p. 2).

Concerns and Implications

Obviously, college and university faculties are concerned about the prospects of anonymous students reporting to the AIA about specific classes. The implication that there is one *truth* which is obvious to everyone, but especially to the AIA, is frightening. Have all the theories been devised? Have all the points of view been discarded except for the view of the AIA? From that perspective, accuracy implies teaching *facts,* since we can put facts to the test of accuracy. Teaching facts is very safe: they are provable. Teaching theory is always taking risks, since each person arrives at conclusions based on his/her own experience and knowledge background. College students should be challenged to think, to sort out ideas that make sense to them. They should test their ideas against those of professors and peers, and against the content of books available on the topic. AIA does not give the individual student credit for any thinking skills. If students can think, read books independently, and use critical thinking skills, then what are we afraid of? Why do we need a "watchdog" group to challenge a professor for us? If an institution has a professor who talks in class about his/her particular political persuasion, the students all know this fact before they sign up for the class. It is hard to imagine the student "grapevine" not making students aware of the climate of the class before they register for it. There are elective classes for students; they do have choices.

It is always possible for a professor to assume a role to provoke the class into a discussion. Many jokes have been told to show the tendency of college students to take notes and not think about what they are writing. Will the recruited AIA student know the difference between expressed views

of the professor and role-playing? Students need to recognize their own biases and acknowledge the world as a place where more than one view can be accepted.

If we carry this reporting activity a little further, we must ask what will happen when a professor is using a text which is not "accurate" according to AIA standards. Will the text be removed?

Why are the students incapable of going to the professor and confronting him/her:

> A class should be a marketplace of ideas, a forum of opposing points of view, where students learn to think critically and where both students and teachers reveal and examine their biases — not hide them. (Hackney, p. 28)

AIA encourages students to "expose" professors, rather than confront them in the classroom. It could have the effect of a vigilante group, inspiring fear and repression rather than open inquiry.

The University of Colorado Student Union took action to condemn the tactics of the AIA at their January 30, 1986, legislative meeting. They had researched the topic, presented arguments on both sides, weighed the evidence, and passed the resolution 12-4-2. They do not want the AIA to think for them. Cheers!

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Being Prepared: Writing Rationales for Frequently Challenged Books

Edgar H. Thompson

Most educators agree that, when a school requires or recommends a work of literature to its students, it should know why and be able to give parents with concerns about a selection an explanation of those reasons. Here Herb Thompson, chair of the VATE Issues Committee and a professor at Emory and Henry College, describes what such a justification should contain and presents a model.

All English teachers have reasons for selecting certain novels to use with a class. In these contentious times, however, books selected for perfectly good reasons may be challenged by members of a local community. The reasons for a challenge may be varied, but they all usually boil down to the desire on the part of a small segment of the population to restrict, to limit, and to control what their children are reading in school.

When such challenges come, most people tend to pass them off as ridiculous. After all, isn't one of the principal purposes of public education in this country to expose students to a variety of ways of looking at the same subject or theme? Surely, it is, but this fact is no reason to assume that a challenge to a book is not a reasonable behavior, even if we feel upon occasion that people who make such challenges must be three-headed monsters. After all, parents send the very best children they have to school; and, when they entrust their children to our care, they want reassurance that we are making appropriate professional judgments that are in the best interest of their children.

Most challenges to books, though certainly not all, can be neutralized if it is obvious to those who make the challenge that teachers have used sound, professional criteria to guide their book selections. Thus, one thing teachers can do to be ready for challenges is to prepare rationales for using books before actually introducing them into a class. Additionally, as they prepare rationales that clearly delineate why they are using a book and what they hope the students will gain from the experience of reading it, teachers are better prepared to teach the book.

Rationales can take several forms. For instance, they can be oral, in the sense that teachers have thought about and articulated verbally to someone, probably another colleague, why they are using a book. An oral rationale will be sufficient in many cases. However, I suggest that rationales should be written out. Any book supplementary to the approved textbook for a class may be challenged by some group of students or parents. To support my case, examine just a brief list of classics that have been challenged in the past (Donelson, 1972):

1. Plato's *Republic:* "This book is un-Christian."
2. George Eliot's *Silas Marner*: "You can't prove what that dirty old man is doing with that child between chapters."
3. Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days:* "Very unfavorable to Mormons."
4. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter:* "A filthy book."
5. Shakespeare's *Macbeth:* "Too violent for children today."
6. Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment:* "Serves as a poor model for young people."
7. Herman Melville's *Moby Dick:* "Contains homosexuality."

If these books can be challenged, then any book a teacher might use is "fair game."

Written rationales can be done either as holistic essays or as written statements that are adapted to a predetermined form. Either way is appropriate, as long as the rationales touch upon the following kinds of issues:

1. *State at what level you will use the book with students.* What may be appropriate for more mature, college bound juniors may not be appropriate for average ninth grade students.
2. *Briefly summarize the book.*
3. *List and discuss the objectives you hope to achieve by using the book.*
4. *Describe changes in students' skills, attitudes, and behaviors you expect to observe if the objectives are met.* This step may seem to be unnecessary, but actually it is a continuation of the previous item. In any rationale that you write, this step could be included as a part of the discussion of the objectives. The point to keep in mind is that, if you have reasons for using books, then you need to specify as clearly and as exactly as possible how students will change as a result of the experience.
5. *Identify possible objections that some people might have to the book.* These potential problems might have to do with the style, theme, or subject of the book. They might also have to do with student interest. For example, ten years ago, I had a number of students who were interested in reading *Helter Skelter,* the book about Charles Manson and his followers. I never used this book in a class; but, if I had chosen to, one of the issues I think I would have had to address in a rationale was student interest. I would have said that students were interested in reading this book, even though its subject matter was grisly at times.

6. *Discuss how you can overcome any possible objections.* For example, regarding students' interest in *Helter Skelter,* I would have said that, though I found Charles Manson reprehensible, I felt it was important, because of student interest, to have them read the book in an environment where they could discuss the book fully. Such discussions would allow students to express any fears they had about issues in the book in safe surroundings and would provide a leveling effect on any extremes in student thinking.
7. *Identify other reputable sources that have recommended the book.* There is certainly safety in numbers. If other professionals have also recommended the book, their recommendations add credence to your claim in your rationale about the book's importance.

Of course, rationales can be written in any way a teacher wants to do them, but they should probably deal with the issues I have just listed at some point. Following is an example of a rationale that I wrote for Edward Abbey's book *Desert Solitaire.* It may give you an idea of how a rationale might look.

Rationale for Teaching *Desert Solitaire*
by Edward Abbey
(grades 11-12, college preparatory)

Summary

Abbey describes his experiences while working as a seasonal park ranger for one year at Arches National Monument near Moab, Utah. As the year progresses, Abbey details his encounters with tourists, bureaucrats, and members of the surrounding community. He blends these encounters with his growing understanding of the relationship of people to nature and particularly to the desert Southwest. His account is highly personal, humorous, and beautifully written.

Teaching Objectives

Teaching this book can help teachers achieve several objectives in the English curriculum. First, the entire book is based upon a largely unedited journal that Abbey kept during his year as a park ranger. As a result, students can learn about the potential power that journal writing has to record a person's growth over a period of time. This book also demonstrates that, if students will free themselves enough to write in a clear, unrestrained manner about what they are seeing, feeling, and thinking, the result will be more unified than they might have thought possible.

Second, Abbey's descriptions of people and places, his careful replication of conversations that he has engaged in or overheard, and his creation of humor are suitable for discussions that focus on the use of fictional techniques in nonfiction writing. Third, as Abbey comes to understand the austere yet beautiful qualities of the desert, he demonstrates for students

how philosophical issues relate to everyday existence. Finally, near the end of the book, Abbey describes the desert in a way redolent of Hardy's description of the heath in rural England in the first 30 pages of *The Return of the Native*. How Abbey does this, how he brings the desert to life and illustrates the harmony possible between the desert and human beings, is worthy of examination and thought.

Changes in Students' Skills, Attitudes, and Behavior If Objectives Are Met

1. Students will have an enhanced concept about how journal writing can be developed into polished pieces of writing.
2. Students will have a greater understanding of how description, dialogue, and humor can be used artistically in a piece of nonfiction.
3. Students will learn that philosophy and a discussion of philosophical issues can relate to their everyday experience.
4. Students will learn how an extended image is created and clarified through a process of gradual refinement.

Problems of Style, Theme, Topic, and Student Interest That Exist in This Book

There are two principal objections that someone might express about this book: Abbey uses coarse language at times, and he does not support the traditional view of God, as espoused by most religions.

How Problems Can Be Overcome

The coarse language Abbey uses consists primarily of oaths of the kind students hear in the halls of most high schools. Abbey's unique personality, however, sets him far enough apart from students that college-bound juniors and seniors should not be adversely affected. They are capable of recognizing that Abbey is a colorful person who has some interesting ideas but that they should not necessarily emulate him, at least not in every way. Regarding Abbey's portrayal of God, teachers can remind students that all of us in this country are entitled to our opinion. Because Abbey hold opinions that may be contrary to what students believe does not mean that students should necessarily embrace Abbey's views. If teachers focus their attention on the literary qualities of the book, Abbey's conception of God should never become an issue.

Reputable Sources That Have Recommended This Book

The New York Times Book Review
English Journal

A Final Note

You may never have a book challenged by anyone as long as you teach. However, a challenge might come tomorrow. Although your school or school

system should have a procedure in place for keeping an open file of rationales for books used in classrooms, you can't wait for departments or supervisors to develop such a procedure if one isn't currently in place. You must take care of yourself. If you know *why* you selected a book, know *what* you are going to emphasize in it, know *how* you want students to change as a result of reading it, and have this information written down coherently, more than likely you will be able to defuse any challenge that might be made. After a book has been challenged is not the time to be writing a rationale. No matter what you are able to throw together at the last minute, you will appear to be unprepared and the damage will be done. Don't let this happen to you.

References about Censorship

The following three references provide varied and detailed discussions about the causes and nature of censorship. Additionally, all of these sources describe procedures for dealing with censorship that you, your school, or your school system might want to adopt.

Burress, Lee and Edward B. Jenkinson. *The Students' Right to Know*. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982.

Davis, James E. *Dealing with Censorship*. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1979.

Donelson, Kenneth L. *The Students' Right to Read*. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1972.

References Containing Rationales for Commonly Challenged Books

I have listed the rationales contained in these references and have included the address of the publisher and the price, if you wish to order them. Rationales written by someone else may give you a starting point for writing your own rationales, but they should not take the place of your own personally written rationales. Only you know why you want to teach a particular book and on what grounds members of your community might object to its use.

Keck, Judith, ed. *Collected Rationales: Taking a Stand Against Censorship*. Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts, 1984. (Copies may be purchased by sending $1.00 to Judith Keck, Licking County Schools, 20 South Second Street, Newark, Ohio 43055.)

Titles for which rationales have been written: *All Hallows' Eve, Brave New World, The Bumblebee Flies Away, A Day No Pigs Would Die, Eats Poems, The Grapes of Wrath, Lord of the Flies, Pardon Me You're Stepping on My Eyeball, The Pigeon,* and *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble.*

Shugert, Diane P., ed., *Rationales for Commonly Challenged Books*. Fall 1983 issue of the *Connecticut English Journal*. (Available from NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801, Members $5.75, Non-members $6.50.)

Titles of books for which rationales have been written: *To Kill a Mockingbird, The Diary of a Young Girl, The Grapes of Wrath, The Catcher in the Rye, The Good Earth, Slaughterhouse-Five, Huckleberry Finn, 1984, Lord of the Flies, The Scarlet Letter, A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, Ethan Frome, Brave New World, A Separate Peace, Of Mice and Men, Animal Farm, A Farewell to Arms, The Learning Tree, Ordinary People, Flowers for Algernon, The Chocolate War, Go Ask Alice, The Pigman, The Outsiders,* and *A Day No Pigs Would Die.*

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Spring 1987 issue of the *Virginia English Bulletin* will have as its focus

Teaching about the English Language

Whether we call ourselves "English teachers" or "language arts teachers," the basis of what we do is the English language. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening take place through language; and, of course, language is theoretically co-equal with literature and composition if one looks at the English curriculum that way. But both in programs to prepare teachers and in the curriculum, language has often been given little attention. The theme of this issue is, therefore, the language component of the English curriculum: What should we teach about it? To whom? At what grade? In what way? The editors look for both theoretical and practical articles, those that review appropriate aspects of linguistics and those that describe teaching units and strategies.

Deadline for submission of manuscripts is February 1, 1987.

Rationale for Defense of *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson (Avon, 1977)

Mary M. Brittain

A faculty member at Virginia Commonwealth University, Mary M. Brittain has prepared a model rationale using the excellent and popular, but also often criticized, Bridge to Terabithia.

I

Bridge to Terabithia is typically recommended for students in the upper elementary grades. It is the story of a developing friendship between Jess, the artistic eleven-year-old son of a working class rural Virginia, and Leslie, the daughter of an intellectual couple whose lifestyle and values make her an oddity in the community. The two children create their own magical kingdom of Terabithia in which no one "could ever really defeat them" (p. 40). Through Leslie, Jess begins to see the possibilities of extending his world and gains the strength to endure Leslie's death and to bring the magic of Terabithia to his younger sister.

II

Objectives in exploring this novel with children might include:

— Identifying the impact of the setting on the two main characters and noting the influence of the setting on the plot.

— Identifying similarities and differences in numerous pairs of characters in the book, e.g., Jess and Leslie, Jess's parents and Leslie's parents, Jess's beloved music teacher and his classroom teacher.

— Noting vocabulary, idioms and constructions peculiar to Appalachia.

— Identifying changes in the value systems of characters as the story progresses.

— Identifying striking use of figurative language.

III

Attaining the above mentioned objectives should result in children's gaining insight into how the environment in which one grows up affects one's developing sense of what is right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, valuable or contemptible, and how children in the same family may react differently to their environment.

Children can explore the ways in which a master author conveys character traits. Jess's character is revealed through the reactions to him of his family,

Leslie, his school mates, and Leslie's parents; through his wonderfully appropriate speech and inner thoughts; and through his behavior toward his father, Leslie, the school bully, Janice, and his little sister. Finally the flowering of Jess's character is shown both subtly and also explicitly by Paterson. Near the end of the novel, Jess muses on how "he had been a nothing . . . trying to hide a whole mob of foolish little fears running riot inside his gut . . . . It was Leslie who had . . . turned him into a king" (p. 26). Leslie's character is almost as fully developed and there are countless revelations of unexpected aspects of the characters with whom they interact.

Paterson's style is perfectly in tune with her subject. The similes and metaphors are as homely and down-to-earth as they are arresting. After his practice run, Jess is "Sweating like a knock-kneed mule" (p. 5). His feelings "bubbled inside him like stew on the back of the stove" (p. 76). His sister's voice is "sweeter than a melted Mars Bar" (p. 7).

The story abounds with expressions indigenous to rural Virginia and would greatly increase the linguistic repertoires of urban children ("shebang," "clabber," "dadgum," "brood sow"). *Bridge to Terabithia* also is enlivened by expressions that may offend some readers. In Paterson's adherence to the likely mode of speech of her characters, terms like "hellhole" (the hot kitchen), "bitched," and "damn" occur; and these have given rise to complaints.

IV

Objections that are likely to arise about *Terabithia* are almost certain to be those concerned with "tabu" expressions. These are not numerous and audiences can come to realize through discussion that they are part and parcel of the characters' linguistic selves. They are there to illuminate rather than shock, and there is no suggestion that such terms are desirable, just part of the picture being painted so truly. If it is anticipated that there will be objections, teachers might make copies available to parents for previewing. The nobility of the theme should persuade a thoughtful reader that this book should not be denied a child.

V

Bridge to Terabithia has won the Newbery Award and is recommended by the *Horn Book, Kirkus Reviews, Booklist* and such authorities in children's literature as Charlotte Huck, Zena Sutherland, Sam Sebesta, Donna Norton, and John Stewig.

from *Areopagitica*

John Milton

Certainly one of the most famous statements against censorship is that of John Milton in Aereopagitica. *Here, as a conclusion to our look at censorship and selection, we excerpt a few of the best-known passages from that work.*

I deny not but that it is of greatest concern in the Church and Commonwealth to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves as well as men and, thereafter, to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors. For books are not absolutely dead things but contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are. Nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively and as vigorously productive as those fabulous Dragons' teeth and, being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men.

And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's Image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself, kills the Image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the Earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not often recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the living labors of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man preserved and stored up in books, since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends, not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at the ethereal and essence, the breath of reason itself, slays an immortality rather then a life.

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He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world. We bring impunity much rather. That which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue, therefore, which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil and knows not the

utmost that vice promises to her followers and rejects it is but a blank virtue, not a pure. Her whiteness is but an excremental whiteness, which was the reason why our sage and serious poet Spenser (whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas), describing true temperance under the person of Guyon, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know, yet abstain.

Since, therefore, the knowledge and survey of vice is in this world so necessary to the constituting of human virtue and the scanning of error, to the confirmation of truth, how can we more safely, and with less danger, scout into the regions of sin and falsity than by reading all manner of tractates and hearing all manner of reason? And this is the benefit which may be had of books promiscuously read.

But of the harm that may result hence, three kinds are usually reckoned. First, is feared the infection that may spread. But, then, all human learning and controversy in religious points must remove out of the world, yea, the Bible itself; for that ofttimes relates blasphemy not nicely. It describes the carnal sense of wicked men not unelegantly; it brings in holiest men passionately murmuring against Providence through all the arguments of Epicurus. In other great dispute, it answers dubiously and darkly to the common reader.

****

If every action which is good or evil in man at ripe years were to be under pittance and prescription and compulsion, what were virtue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what gramercy to be sober, just, or continent?

Many there be that complain of Divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing, and he had been else a mere artificial Adam. . . . We ourselves esteem not of that obedience or love or gift which is of force. God, therefore, left him free, set before him a provoking object, ever almost in his eyes. Herein consisted his merit; herein, the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did he create passions within us, pleasures round about us, but these rightly tempered are the very ingredients of virtue? They are not skillful considerers of human things who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin; for, besides that it is a huge heap increasing under the very act of diminishing, though some part of it may for a time be withdrawn from some persons, it cannot from all in such a universal thing as books are. And when this is done, yet the sin remains entire. Though you take from a covetous man all his treasure, he has yet one jewel left, for you cannot bereave him of his covetousness. Banish all objects of lust, shut up all youth into the severest discipline that can be exercised in any hermitage, you cannot make them chaste that came not thither so: such great care and wisdom is required to the right managing of this point.

Suppose we could expel sin by this means. Look how much we thus expel of sin, so much we expel of virtue, for the matter of them both is the same. Remove that, and you remove them both alike. This justifies the high providence of God, who, though he commands us temperance, justice, continence, yet pours out before us, even to a profuseness, all desirable things and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and satiety. Why should we then affect a rigor contrary to the manner of God and of nature, by abridging or scanting those means, which books freely permitted are, both to the trial of virtue and the exercise of truth?

1985 NCTE RESOLUTION ON IMPROVING CONDITIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHING

This resolution expresses the concern of teachers of English about restrictions being placed on their teaching approaches and methods as a result of recent reports on school reform. The proposers pointed out that mandates handed down by state and local school boards and school administrators sometimes restrict teachers from using methods that would be appropriate for students with particular modes of learning. Some students, they said, are thus denied opportunities to experience the speaking, writing, listening, reading, and thinking activities they need to develop their language abilities. Many such mandates, the NCTE members said, also fail to address problems of class size and student-teacher ratios. They ignore available knowledge about the conditions necessary for effective teaching and learning of the language arts. The text of the resolution follows.

RESOLVED, that in order to address the national concern for making students better readers, writers, listeners and speakers and for effective acquisition, development and use of language at all levels, the National Council of Teachers of English reaffirm its positions on the need to reduce class size and student-teacher ratios at all levels of instruction;

that NCTE reaffirm its position on what constitutes necessary conditions for teaching the English language arts;

that NCTE urge those who generate and control budgets, including federal and state departments of education and governing boards of higher education, legislatures, school boards, superintendents and principals, to make these positions their policies and provide adequate funding to implement them;

that NCTE urge all accrediting agencies to adopt these guidelines as criteria for accreditation; and

that NCTE inform the widest possible audience of these positions, including parents, professional education organizations, and accrediting agencies.

Great English Teaching Ideas

EDITOR'S NOTE: For the next several issues, the seven sites in the Virginia Writing Project will each assume responsibility for the Great English Teaching Ideas column. The site at the University of Virginia has responsibility for the column in this issue.

Central Virginia Writing Project

Joseph E. Strzepek, Guest Editor

The following great ideas may appear not to share a common theme or topic, but the authors are connected in that their ideas show a great deal of respect for the abilities of students to use their imaginations, judgments, and values when given highly motivating assignments. For instance, I enjoy writing poetry and sharing my poetry with students. But in looking for a way to deal with the poems as literature and as a motivation for students to write their own, I used the following poem, questions for discussion, and writing activity.

Us Guys

by J. Strzepek

My father loved
to tell the story
of how
he

home from the furnace
at the glass factory

found me and Richard Brody
sitting on the front porch
holding the football

I had kicked
through the curtained window
of my parents' bedroom
on the second floor.

Joseph E. Strzepek is an Associate Professor of English Education at the University of Virginia.

We confessed so readily that
all he did
(proud of his forbearance)
was to

help me extract the spidery shards
measure the window
gather the silver
from my paper route earnings
cached in a coffee canister

drive us to the Corning Building Company
tell the story of my errant kick
watch the glass be cut to size

return home
and
putty in the new pane.

So that my mother
(working the opposite shift)
would never even
know.

Just a secret
among
us guys.

Read "Us Guys." Consider these questions.

1) What does the poem show about the father?
2) What does it show about the narrator's feelings about the father?

Write a poem in which the first line says:

My _____ loved to (or always) _____ . . . . .

In the first blank, name someone living or dead, real or fictional — for example, your mother or Attila the Hun. In the second blank say what it was your person loved to do or always did — tell a story, kill a Roman, weed the garden. Complete the rest of the poem by describing what it was your person (character) loved to do. Your description ought to reveal your narrator's impression of your person. That impression may be more complex than simple. The impression should be created with concrete images and actions rather than with abstractions.

Creating a Character

When I have asked students to write short stories, I have frequently encountered the problem of students having trouble getting started, and I have often received stories with wooden, one-dimensional characters and unconvincing resolutions. The plan that follows has helped my students avoid these problems.

First, for homework, I ask each student to make up a character. The

student is to give his character a name, an age, and a general description. The next day, I call on one student — generally a brave one. I then ask other students to question him about his character. The students may ask any questions they want about the character. The person who is fielding the questions must answer each question, spontaneously, if necessary. He is, after all, the creator, so he is expected to know everything about his character. Questions may be serious or frivolous. What did he eat for breakfast? Has he ever been to Yellowstone? Does he wear an earring? When did he last cry?

Given enough time, the student sees his character as a real human being. Frequently conflicts emerge from the questions, and often the questioners see beyond the tempting easy — and unconvincing — resolution of these conflicts.

The procedure is lengthy — ten to fifteen minutes per student. Since questioning the whole class is probably too time-consuming, we usually let the whole class question one or two students, and then divide the class into smaller groups so that each student will have a chance to be examined.

Although I allow students to discard the chosen character and invent a new one, most students choose to write about the character that has come to life during class. The next phase of the short story writing — deciding on a conflict — is amazingly easy after this exercise. In fact, most students are eager to begin writing.

Julia Shields
is an English teacher at Charlottesville High School and a clinical instructor in the University of Virginia teacher education program.

Reflecting upon Our Mortality

When I heard about the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger,* I was in the process of planning a lesson. As I watched the bewildered expression on the faces of Christa McAuliffe's students, I wondered how their teachers would deal with the incident when they returned. Would they try to help their students express and come to terms with their deepest feelings, or would they carefully avoid the issue and the unpleasantness it produced? What would I do? I answered my own question as I began re-writing my objectives for the next day's lesson. I wanted my students to articulate their feelings about the tragedy, gain comfort in knowing that others experienced similar pains, and become aware of what others did to cope with loss.

The next day I asked my students (who were actually colleagues in a methods course) how they felt about the space shuttle explosion. We listed our feelings on the board and talked about how tragic it is when people with such promise and potential die before they can accomplish their goals.

Christa McAuliffe wanted to "bring the wonder and excitement of space to her classroom." Death, however, prevented her from fulfilling this desire.

After this discussion I asked students to pretend that they were on a space shuttle that was about to explode. In their journals they wrote down the three most important things they wouldn't get to experience because of an unexpected death. We shared these responses with each other. I then explained that John Keats, a poet, thought and wrote about loss and death in many of his poems. Unlike the space shuttle astronauts, Keats knew he was dying and often reflected on the things he wouldn't get to do because of an early death. As I read Keats' poem "When I Have Fears" aloud, students followed along.

When I Have Fears
by John Keats

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charact'ry,
Hold like rich garners the full-ripened grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starred face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love!—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

We then talked about the experiences which cause Keats to mourn when he thinks of losing them. We discovered that the things we feared to lose were similar to those Keats feared to lose. Like us, he feared losing the opportunity to achieve an important goal (writing in "high-piled books" everything he can "glean" from his "teeming brain") and the opportunity to love another person (to "relish in the faery power/Of unreflected love").

When we looked at the last two and a half lines of Keats' poem, we discovered what he did when he had fears that he would cease to be:

—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

These lines led us into a discussion of what we do when we have these fears. Do we deny? repress? accept? Do we "Rage against the dying light" as Dylan Thomas suggests, "stand alone and think" as Keats does, or do something different? Their assignment for that night was to write a poem that expressed their fears of losing the three experiences they wrote about in their journals and that told what they did when they had those fears. I suggested they could use Keats' form ("When I have fears that I may cease to be/Before _____ then I _____") as a way of beginning.

In this lesson we all had an opportunity to explore our responses to

life and literature in a meaningful way. Keats' poem helped us to understand our feelings and our feelings helped us to understand Keats' poem. Though confronting our thoughts about death and loss may be difficult and painful at times, I hope teachers in Mrs. McAuliffe's school as well as everywhere in the nation found and continue to find ways to help their students explore, understand and communicate their innermost feelings. As English teachers I think we have the richest resources available to deal with the hurting heart; we have a reservoir of literature which records everything that man has ever thought or felt.

Beth Schnell
is a student teacher from the University of Virginia, working with Julia Shields.

The Censor's Dilemma: Learning By Doing

We need to help students understand how censorship affects their lives. It will come up: Why can't we read "The Miller's Tale"? Why isn't *Portnoy's Complaint* in our library? Why can't I say "crap" in my speech? Why did they cut those lines out of *Macbeth*?

One way to handle questions like these (if we can rule out "because so-and-so said so") is to point out various considerations — appropriateness for audience, literary value, moral instruction, or whatever — and perhaps open the subject for speculation.

Another way is to give interested students the chance to do something about censorship and learn from the experience. The following is a list of activities that can be used in a unit on censorship or in units on library skills, writing skills, and so on. The activities are designed to be sequential but could be carried out independent of each other.

For most activities, divide students into small groups. Students may be grouped homogeneously or heterogeneously on the basis of tolerance for censorship. I prefer heterogeneity because it necessitates compromise. The activities are designed for high-school-age students.

1. Ask students to define "censorship." Ask them to write explicit distinctions, if they see any, between censorship and, say, "selection" or "editing."
2. Have students find out if there is a school or district policy governing censorship of student reading or writing. Students may interview editors, principals, librarians, parents, etc., to see what consensus, if any, exists in their school and community. (Interviewing and writing up these interviews is good practice in the whole spectrum of speaking, listening, and composing skills.) Invite someone like the principal or director of instruction into class to answer questions.
3. Ask students in a group to write a proposed policy on censorship and a rationale for that policy for their school. The policy should be detailed enough to make clear how it would apply, or not apply, to teachers,

librarians, administrators, parents, and students. The ideal culmination would be to try to negotiate a final report among groups and submit it to the principal or the School Board.

4. Having performed Number 3 above, groups may be turned loose on the school newspaper, library, or literary magazine to determine the level of consistency with their standards. It is possible, of course, that they will find *absent* material that is valuable and allowable.
5. Ask each group to write a suggested code for television programming — perhaps a list of "thou shalt nots." They should decide whether the policy would be voluntary or mandatory. Have each group monitor TV for a week, policy in hand, recording violations. Individual differences in interpreting the policy are likely — and instructive. One variation on this activity is to try to get a set of guidelines from somewhere else — the PTA, the National Organization for Women, Moral Majority — and monitor television shows to see how those would apply.
6. Conduct a trial of a reporter on charges of violating national security or anti-defamation laws. It wouldn't hurt to read Plato's account of Socrates' defense at his trial.

In each case, the idea is to produce something written or spoken on an issue of some interest to students — that will actually be mailed, published, or performed for an audience. In the process, students will learn something about the principles, distinctions, and tradeoffs involved in matters of verbal freedom.

Dan Walker

is on leave from Courtland High School (Spotsylvania) where he is chairman of the English Department. Currently he is a doctoral student at the University of Virginia and supervises student teachers.

Your VATE Officers

Joan Lawson
President

In my first life I was a nurse — one of the two acceptable professions for a girl from Boston who graduated from high school in the early fifties. In my second life, I embarked on what was considered the most rewarding career for a woman: I stayed at home to rear three children born in rapid succession to me and a husband struggling to complete a doctoral program at M.I.T. The father was graduated at the same time the eldest child entered nursery school. It was this momentous event of the first born and only male child entering school that aroused my real interest in education.

I enrolled in early childhood education courses and became a student of the Montessori method of teaching. The first motivation for these studies was to know more about what my children were being taught; or, even more importantly, what they should or might be learning in their early education. However, it did not take long for me to be hooked into the other profession for women — teaching.

In this third life, I taught "little ones" for a few years, and then, according to my children, I moved on up the educational ladder with them. I went back to school full time and received a degree in English along with a secondary teaching certificate. Since then I have accumulated two master's degrees, including one in supervision and administration. My motivations for continuing to study have not changed much since I first entered teaching: I still want to know what kids need to be learning and what I need to be teaching to help kids grow into the twenty-first century. In the sixties and seventies, I strove to be the kind of teacher I wanted my children to have. Now, at the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, I work with and supervise the kind of teacher I want my five grandchildren to experience in the future.

Stephanie McConachie
Secretary

I tend to plunge into things, sometimes fully clothed and unequipped for the waves. Projects which I can design and control pull me in the most. Friends applaud when I tell them how I was able to say no to a new endeavor. Right now, as a K-12 English language arts curriculum coordinator, I wade through staff development, division-wide concerns, curriculum development, interdisciplinary structures, and resource lists, sometimes all at once. The two classes I teach every day at the high school occasionally swamp me. For better or for worse, English education gives focus to my professional life. The Eastern Virginia Writing Project and its first mate, Mark Gulesian; VATE; and the state's writing-to-learn program that Judy Self anchors keep me buoyed.

On the personal side, I enjoy being raised by my two sons, Andrew, nine, and Chris, fourteen, a dog with a too-strong sense of territory, and a cat who deigns to greet us every second day only because his outdoor prey got away and his stomach is empty. My husband and I share a love for the theatre and books. We have been in the same book discussion group for over six years now. Our best reads so far have included Davies' *The Fifth Business* and Marquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Betty Slovacek Smith
Secondary Member-at-Large

Although I was born in Texas, I do not own oil wells, know J.R. Ewing, or ride horses. I have lived in sunny Florida as well as frigid Minnesota, but I find the less radical climate of Virginia more to my liking.

I have been a teacher all my life: I almost believe my first breath filled my lungs with chalk dust instead of air. Only in the early years of teaching did I waiver in my decision, vowing nightly to quit. However, each night, after reassessing the day, I would realize the drama of learning was still unfolding. Fervently, the next day I would go back committed to challenge my students again.

Now, in my copious free time, I view the world from behind a camera lens, having gone beyond an Instamatic to more complicated equipment. My escapes are many, from delving into the past through my love of antiques to testing new recipes on family and friends. When I do sit still for a few moments, I have one of many needlework projects in hand.

My husband Pete, an attorney in Norfolk, shares my love of reading, traveling, and sports. After seven years of marriage, I have finally convinced him I married him for more reasons then getting an easier last name to spell.

Patricia Price
JH/MS Member-at-Large

I can never remember not wanting to be a teacher, but I can clearly remember the day as a six-year-old when I decided *not* to become a mathematics teacher. My parents had given me a toy blackboard, a supply of chalk, and a third grade math book called *Busy Beavers*. I puzzled over my "lessons," not understanding anything at all in the text; I quickly shucked it for a *Grimm's Fairy Tales* reader and turned to the joys of teaching literature.

My day at Shawsville High and Middle Schools ranges from teaching 12-year-olds in a Latin-based humanities course to 13-year-olds in basic language arts and 17-year-olds in Honors British Literature. On Wednesdays, I extend my student population to 20, 30, 40, and 50-year-olds at New River Community College where I teach a composition course. I enjoy working with students of such various ages and abilities; it's a real challenge "switching gears" to meet the needs of such a diverse group but a very rewarding one.

I especially enjoy teaching British literature because it gives me an excuse to indulge in one of my loves — travel. A confirmed Anglophile, I spent a wonderful week in Oxfordshire last summer soaking up the history and, alas, the cream teas. Another favorite part of my affections is reserved for my two dogs, a fat Australian terrier, and a wild black poodle; both provide me with an incentive to hike the lovely trails in our part of the Blue Ridge Mountains. My weekends are spent hiking and fishing at our cabin on Little River where I occasionally catch a fish or two.